SELF-DETERMINATION THEORY AND RELIGIOUS INTERNALIZATION AMONG

MUSLIMS: CONCEPTUALIZING ENGAGEMENT THROUGH MUTUAL CRITICAL

CORRELATION

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ABSTRACT

SELF-DETERMINATION THEORY AND RELIGIOUS INTERNALIZATION AMONG MUSLIMS: CONCEPTUALIZING ENGAGEMENT THROUGH MUTUAL CRITICAL CORRELATION

by

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In this dissertation I seek to lay down the conceptual groundwork for substantive and critical engagement between self-determination theory and relational Islamic discourses. In particular, the groundwork I prepare is to better facilitate a notion of religious internalization that is based on mutual critical correlation. This groundwork comprises 1) understanding SDT and OIT (organismic integration theory) on their own terms as psychological theories of motivation and internalization, 2) closely examining the methods by which Islam may be dialogically related to the concepts of SDT and OIT, 3) relating cardinal conceptual anchors of SDT with particular focus on its theory of human nature and autonomy, to relational concepts in Islamic scripture and discourses. I hope this groundwork will enable me to mutually and critically correlate SDT and Islamic discourses on issues of internalizability of Islamic content, the meta-discourse on proximal and pervasive contexts, individual and situational differences, and particular strategies facilitating internalization of Islamic beliefs, values and regulations.

Dedication: I thank my wife and children, my mother and my sisters for the love and strength they provide me and being constant reminders of Allah's blessings. I dedicate this work to my late father who I miss sorely and hope to reunite with in peace and felicity.

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Chapter 1: Introduction – Why Study Religious Internalization

Why study religious internalization?

Gordon Allport in his seminal work, *The Individual and His Religion*, explained the subordination and domestication of religion in the modern world by choosing an interesting comparison. Writing in the 1950's, Allport poignantly observed that "during the past fifty years religion and sex seem to have reversed their positions… psychologists write with the frankness of Freud or Kinsey on the sexual passions of mankind, but blush and grow silent when the religious passions come into view."[1] The disregard toward religion as a motivator or meaning-maker is hardly attributable to a psychologist's idiosyncrasies, whether in the form of ideological commitments or academic expectations. A simple perusal of news headlines today will undoubtedly confirm Allport's point. Between sexual scandals and exploits of entertainers and policy makers, at best, religion barely exerts influence over a limited number of issues that probably can be counted on one hand (e.g. abortion, creationism, same-sex marriage, and tenuously, political elections). However, one might contend that while religion's influence over socio-political life has waned historically, religion continues to play a major role in the personal lives of many believers. This objection misses the point. Certainly, there are people who continue to find religion important and strive to live by it, but if life is reduced to the 'personal,'

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[1] Gordon Allport, *The Individual and His Religion* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1954), v.

what hegemonic forces create the context for meaning and how does this shape and inform the meaning supplied by the notion of religion?[2]

Montesquieu, in a Machiavellian tone, explains how religion can be reduced to feebleness: "a more certain way to attack religion is by favor, by the comforts of life, by the hope of fortune, not by what reminds one of it, but by what makes one forget it; not by what makes one indignant, but by what leads one to indifference when other passions act on our souls and when those that religion inspires are silent."[3] Montesquieu is keenly aware that religious sentiment (to borrow Allport's expression) and conviction are not simply matters of rational deliberation reduced to weighing of empirical evidences. And thus, the most effective way to destroy one's religiosity is not to demonstrate the falsity of its truth claims. Rather, Montesquieu insists that the most effective way to undermine and enfeeble religion is to introduce forces capable of appealing to, diverting, and captivating one's internal/natural energies, drives, and instincts. In this way religion is never directly challenged, it is just eclipsed. In fact, this strategy has proven true historically. In Western societies, the Enlightenment, Renaissance, Industrial Revolution, etc. ushered in a barrage of ideas and transformations that ultimately reduced religion to the personal and private. Of course, this is not to suggest that such historical changes occurred simply by persuasion and assent; a great deal of coercion and violence characterized these upheavals, both as internal and internecine conflicts in Europe as

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[2] Muslims, for example, are accustomed to repeating that Islam is a complete way of life, which begs the questions, not only what is Islam but whose life and what is life? If our consciousness is limited to living out our lives as hermits, to use perhaps an extreme example, then the very meaning of Islam risks being reduced to that conceptualization and practice. The Muslim hermit legitimately may still assert that Islam is a complete way of life, insofar Islam maps onto the activities and behaviors of a hermit's existence, but the adage falls short of explaining both Islam and life.

[3] Charles de Secondat Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, ed. Anne M. Cohler, Basia Carolyn Miller, and Harold Samuel Stone (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 489.

well as the exportation of these ideals and regimes outside of Europe. Nonetheless, winning hearts and minds is sine qua non for any transformation to endure. As a socio-psychological phenomena, this dissertation explores some important psychological processes that are involved in not just losing faith but holding and living faith meaningfully across different environments and social contexts.

In this regard, D.Z. Phillips offers a reasonable entry point into the discussion that sutures psychological processes and social change. Phillips asks, "in what way can religious pictures lose their hold on people's lives?"[4] He echoes Montesquieu by positing an alternative to the religious picture. He explains, "A religious picture loses its hold on a person's life because a rival picture wins his allegiance. The picture of the Last Judgment may lose its hold on a person because he has been won over by a rival secular picture."[5] As with Montesquieu, Phillips 'rival picture' is not a direct or diametrical challenge to religion. Phillips clarifies that "the other picture is a rival, not because it shows that the original picture is a mistake, but because if it is operative in a person's life, the very character of its claim excludes the religious picture."[6] In Montesquieian terms, the rival picture makes one forget religion by the virtue that it displaces and then replaces religious sensibilities with others that are as effective in filling the voids of human needs and wants, and as effective as expressing human will out into the world. There is no need here to pit the truth claims of the rival picture against the religious picture as that may very well stoke indignation and thus give expression to religious sentiment. The religious flame is not being extinguished but allowed to burn out.

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[4] D. Z. Philips, *Death and Immortality* (London: Macmillan, 1970), 73.
[5] Ibid., 74.
[6] Ibid.

But how does the rival picture overtake the religious? How is the grip of the religious picture loosened? Phillips answers, "it is more likely that the character of the religious practices had never developed and that the routine was carried out in a context of indifference. The practice was not nourished by other aspects of [the person's] life, but was independent of them."[7] While there may be other possibilities as to how and why a religious picture loses hold, it seems that Phillips captures the most salient and dispositive factor. A religious picture loses its hold and is susceptible to rival pictures insofar it is not well internalized. To state the issue in the inverse, religious beliefs and sentiment that are well internalized would likely defy Montesquieu's strategy or, at the least, frustrate attempts of a rival picture. It is interesting that both Montesquieu and Phillips use the word 'indifference' as an important signifier of religious sentiment that is just about to die at the feet of its rival. For both, indifference appears to be a hermeneutic failure to relate religious concepts, and content in general, to other dynamic forces that animate our lives. On the other hand, internalization , while also a hermeneutic act, propelling the psychological process in the individual, is fully engaged with external, social realities and their own dynamic changes.

Preserving Islamic religious identity

For many religious communities across the world, especially those living in secular societies, the primary concern is preserving a religious identity knowing full well the challenge this presents in the modern world. For Muslims living in the West, Tariq Ramadan asks, "How can the flame of faith, the light of the spiritual life, and faithfulness to the teachings of Islam be preserved in environments that no longer refer to God and in educational systems that have

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[7] Ibid.

little to say about religion?"[8] The indifference that modern social contexts induce toward

religion is readily perceived as a threat to the development and preservation of a Muslim

identity among religious parents, religious institutions, and the Muslim community. It is

remarkable, as Tariq Ramadan notes, that the first generation of Muslim immigrants who left

behind an environment more conducive to religious identity for a foreign environment, that

they may not have been able to fully appreciate the ethos of, were nonetheless quite successful

in transmitting their religious beliefs and values. It is now the second and third generations that

are finding out that the osmotic methods of their parents will simply not do. These generations

are finding not only that they lack substantive literacy in Islam but also that the work of

transmitting faith to their children is a more resource-intensive process than it seemed for their

parents. The world has grown more complex and complicated and the answers that religious

communities seek demand a more sophisticated and nuanced understanding of not only the

environments in which they live but also the content of their own faith.

In the face of the modern challenge, Muslims have differing conceptions as to the

trajectory of faith formation. Some Muslims speak of maintaining and preserving religious

identity. These Muslims seem more concerned about transmitting and inheriting faith as a

continuity of tradition seemingly implying that the faith that is passed down is fixed and

familiar. Given the unpropitious environment it is no wonder that religious adherents and

leadership place a premium on the preservation of identity. Eboo Patel poignantly observes,

"any attempt to work with youth in religious communities must begin with the understanding

that the preservation of religious identity is perhaps the single most important concern in faith

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[8] Tariq Ramadan, *Western Muslims and the Future of Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 126.

communities."[9] It is not unreasonable to say that this concern is shared by *all* religious based

communities. The severe and protracted identity crisis experienced at the delicate

developmental stage of childhood and adolescence and possibly persisting through a much

longer period of life, if left untreated, seems almost universal. It is interesting to note, and

perhaps a testament, that religion is looked to anchor and stabilize one's identity. It is not

uncommon for parents, steeped in nationalist and ethnic traditions divorced from religion and

even secular outlooks, approach religious leaders and teachers to help 'guide' their children. In

spite of the internal reformation religion continues to experience, the perception remains

among adherents and leadership that religion still offers and is capable of forming a positive

identity in a person. The aspiration is to develop "a more durable young adult identity capable

of establishing… 'commitments in an uncertain world.'"[10] These commitments, first and

foremost, require the person "to justify their beliefs, in an implicit way at least, both to

themselves and others."[11] Before one can hold to a commitment by which s/he can internally

and externally demonstrate a certain clarity, cogency, and consistency of identity, a significant

value must be tied to a belief or set of beliefs, or in other words convictions by which religious

beliefs are not just explained but also affirmed. The term conviction implies a certain affective

quality of internalization and ownership, but it is important to remember that convictions are

"not just emotional statements or personal feelings; they are believed to have real cognitive

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[9] Eboo Patel, "Affirming Identity, Achieving Pluralism," in *Building the Interfaith Youth Movement*, ed. Eboo Patel, Patrice Brodeur, (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2006), 16.
[10] James P. Keen "Young Adult Development, Religious Identity, and Interreligious Solidarity in an Interfaith Learning Community," in *Building the Interfaith Youth Movement*, ed. Eboo Patel, Patrice Brodeur, (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2006), 30.
[11] Eboo Patel, "Affirming Identity, Achieving Pluralism," in *Building the Interfaith Youth Movement*, ed. Eboo Patel, Patrice Brodeur, (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2006), 17. (Note: this statement was said by Anthony Giddens without further reference).

content."[12] Convictions are arrived at through a reflective and dialogical process that involve both assessments of reality and scripture as well as an investment of emotional attachment. By stressing preservation, however, the implication seems to be that even if external social contexts and the pressures therein are capable of transforming the faith, the aim is to see the faith persist in the form practiced by the previous generation in spite of this environment. This perspective seems to undervalue the impact of the environment and/or perhaps overvalue the imperviousness of religious faith and values. For these Muslims, internalization and indoctrination may not represent significantly different concepts and phenomena. We will return to this point a little later in this section.

Belonging in the modern world

Recently, some Muslims have expressed the need for something more than just preservation of the faith. While not discounting the need to transmit religious beliefs, values, and practices, these Muslims seem to be more conscious of the role and impact of the environment and socio-cultural contexts that Western Muslims live in. For these Muslims the transmission of an Islamic identity must reckon and find livable space within the dominant secular, humanistic, liberal thought and values of the West. While the emphasis of the Muslim group mentioned earlier is on preserving faith, for this group of Muslims the emphasis is on belonging in the modern world. Abdallah Sahin in his book, *New Directions in Islamic* Education explains, "the presence of a critical, dialogical and transformative educational self-understanding is the key to facilitating the emergence of a balanced and more Islamic sense of

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[12] James L. Heft, "Learned Ignorance: An Introduction," in *Learned Ignorance*, ed. James L. Heft, S.M., Reuven Firestone, and Omid Safi, (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 2011), 3.

belonging in the modern world."[13] Belonging in the modern world can ostensibly be effected by

abandoning the religious identity altogether and adopting a Western worldview, but this is

clearly not the intent of these Muslims. Likewise, while these words may seem to suggest

reshaping or reforming what Islam is and what it means to be a Muslim, for Sahin and other

likeminded Muslims, the objective is not simply acquiescing to Western modernity. In fact, he

warns against obsequiousness:

> This painful encounter with Western modernity has created one of the most
> dramatic ruptures within traditional Muslim self-understanding. Instead of
> creating a culture of engagement to deal with pressing issues, the challenges
> define Muslim responses to cultural and political change. Perhaps the most
> significant and devastating aspect of these processes has been the emergence of
> new Islamic self-understandings that are constructed in what is either an explicit
> or implicit imitation of Western secular modernity and its institutions.[14]

Sahin's case for belonging in the modern world hinges on an important historical narrative that

explains the identity crisis many Muslims suffer from till this day. He explains that Western

projects of colonization,[15] modernization, and cultural hegemony over the last two centuries

have alienated Muslims from their own values and patterns of thought and behavior, and in

fact, through a process of reaction formation, forced Muslims not won over by secularism to

define themselves and their societies reactively against invading forces. The subjugation of

Muslims politically, socially, and economically, produced defined psychological patterns based

on insular and reactive impulses. Some may assume that Islam, and perhaps religion in general,

by virtue of its high truth claims, resists foreign ideologies to keep intact a pure, unadulterated

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[13] Abdallah Sahin, *New Directions in Islamic Education: Pedagogy & Identity Formation* (*Western Muslims and the Future of Islam* (Leicestershire: Kube Publishing Ltd., 2013), 2.

[14] Ibid., 14.

[15] Salman Sayyid observers that over 75% of Muslims around the world were colonized by European empires at the turn of the 20th century. See Salman Sayyid, "Empire Islam, and the Postcolonial" in *The Oxford Handbook of Postcolonial Studies*, ed. Graham Huggan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 127.

form. Sahin, however, reminds us that even early Muslim scholars (many of them later associated with orthodoxy) creatively engaged Greek intellectual thought absorbing and re-fashioning significant aspects. He explains, "because the Islamic encounter did not occur under the conditions of a socio-political crisis, Islamic religious discourse managed to engage creatively with ancient Greek intellectual heritage and express it within the wider Islamic frame of meaning."[16] While not all Muslim scholars integrated Greek thought, for most Muslim scholars engaging it was not perceived to threaten Islamic religious identity. Sahin's point is the autonomy and confidence Muslim scholars felt permitted a fluid relationship with thoughts originating outside of revelation. In such circumstances Muslims were emotionally confident and cognitively capable of critically reflecting on their own religious tradition as well as assimilating and accommodating ideas and thoughts emanating from foreign sources.

Unlike their early predecessors who were psychologically unburdened by a sense of subjugation and an inferiority complex, modern Muslims find themselves alienated in a world in which they make up the majority in over 50 countries. The rigid and defensive disposition now deeply ingrained in the modern Muslim psyche and sedimented by Western political and cultural hegemony has prevented Muslims from feeling belonging in the modern world. Not to mention that global Islamophobia has to a large degree succeeded in otherizing Muslims. The response to humanize Muslims in some ways can be seen to create space for Muslims where they feel they belong in the modern world. By emphasizing belonging, the message seems to be

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[16] Abdallah Sahin, *New Directions in Islamic Education: Pedagogy & Identity Formation* (*Western Muslims and the Future of Islam* (Leicestershire: Kube Publishing Ltd., 2013), 57. It is interesting to note that Sahin fails to mention that several Islamic scholars, including, for example, Ibn Taymiyya lamented the willingness of some early Muslims to assimilate Greek thought in Islamic legal theory and theology. In no way was the reception of Greek thought into the Islamic disciplines welcomed evenly across Islamic scholarship.

that Muslims are incapable of escaping the complex identity crisis and the dysfunctionality of modern Muslim life without first experiencing relations that support socio-psychological meaning and affirmation.

Creating Islamic futures

The third and emerging attitude toward faith formation among Muslims can be seen as a project to create Islamic futures. Before we proceed to examine this attitude it is helpful to keep in mind that all three attitudes and respective projects are responding to the modern condition characterized not only by the direct challenge it poses to religious identity and truth-claims but also the complex technologies of obsolescence and irrelevance it uses to undermine the assumptions of religiosity. While the first group of Muslims stresses the importance of preserving an Islamic religious identity and the second group emphasizes belonging in the modern world, there is a new, emerging discourse around creating Islamic futures. These Muslims share the same concerns as the others but analyze the problem of the West through deconstructive epistemological and ontological categories that lay bare the contingency of its cultural and ideological identity. Both the universal claims of modernity and the relativism of postmodernity are turned on itself and strategically appropriated to "introduce contingency into the formation of Western identity."[17] By dismantling the putative universalism of the Western enterprise that for centuries has sought to relegate Islam as a scandalous presence in the world, another future can be posited for the world other than the one imposed and maintained by the West; the prospect of Islamic futures.[18] Creating Islamic futures is a

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[17] Salman Sayyid, *Recalling the Caliphate* (London: C. Hurst & Co., 2014), 23.
[18] Ibid., 1.

generative enterprise that is based on "the ability to articulate Muslim autonomy with consistency and hope, which demands that Muslims engage in the difficult but necessary task of writing their own history as Muslims."[19] So instead of arguing for belonging in the modern world, the crucial point here is that the exercise of Muslim autonomy coupled with the contingency of the Western enterprise opens up space to a discourse on the place of the West and Islam in the world and their respective relations to power and authority.

In terms of Muslim religious identity, Muslim autonomy also involves the ability to critically engage Islamic intellectual thought and offer rejoinders and new directions. Likewise, the expression of Muslim autonomy involves cultural production in social contexts by suturing and synthesizing Islamic knowledge and values with modern conventions, and imagining alternatives grounded in an Islamically informed epistemology. As mentioned earlier, if Islam is a way of life, then asserting Muslim autonomy and creating Islamic futures must engage the full range of what constitutes human life.[20] Some particular cultural production in areas of music, art, literature, science (and others), while informed by Islamic sensibilities, according to some conceptualizations of Islamic law and theology may be antithetical or inconsistent with the contents within these domains, but ultimately the ability for Muslims to be Muslims means that these issues would be mediated and resolved dialogically according to the organic structures and elements that sustain Muslim autonomy.

This attitude stands in contrast to the preservationist one discussed earlier. Subjected to the critique of the generative project, the project to preserve Islamic religious identity reifies

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[19] Ibid., 11.
[20] Ibid., 186.

Islam and Islamic religiosity and simply seeks to transmit religious knowledge in a familiar form. Such reification involves forgetting the historical conditions that shaped the religious identity sought to be passed on to posteriority. In contrast, the project to create Islamic futures recognizes the contingent nature and reified form of religious identity and therefore considers preservation and transmission of a particular identity as a historical impossibility. Instead, faith formation proceeds through a generative process that does not seek to resist change but to understand it and bring it into an interplay with Muslim autonomy. The notion of Muslim autonomy assumes a certain essence to Islam that is immutable; that allows the categories of 'Islamic' and 'Islamicate' to exist. While there are differing conceptualizations of the essence of Islam, what remains true is that there can be no Islam without Quran and without the Prophet Muhammad. This does not mean that 'Islamic' and 'Islamicate' are informed only by the Quran and the Prophet Muhammad, but that they are essential and necessary in the constitution of these categories (however tenable). As Muslims exist and function autonomously in this world, the religious identity that emerges is a process, that is, a continuous formation, involving an interplay between the Quran and the Prophet Muhammad (primarily via hermeneutical engagement) and the ever-changing elements that characterize living in this world. Through this interplay historical, contingent Muslim identities and Muslim subjectivities form that meaningfully relate to their social conditions and project Islam into the future.

Preserving an Islamic identity, belonging in the modern world, and creating Islamic futures represent three differing trajectories of faith formation among Muslims today. As attitudes and projects they invariably stand to benefit from a deep conceptualization of internalization, and in some ways can be seen as three expressions correlating with each of the

psychological needs posited by self-determination theory. Preserving Islamic identity seems to emphasize the need for competence, belonging in the modern world seems to prioritize the need for relatedness, and creating Islamic futures seems to express the need for autonomy. These psychological needs will be explained in detail in the section on self-determination theory. While many predicted gradual secularization and assimilation of Muslims in Western societies, Islam continues to be a strong force informing personal and collective identities of its adherents as can be seen in three trajectories described earlier.[21] However, the modern forces of the globalized West, including liberalism, secularism, and materialism in many ways challenge and frustrate faith formation among Muslims and, therefore, any notion of internalization must take seriously the realities of the wider social context.

Education, Indoctrination, and Internalization

Before we discuss how best to study religious internalization and the value of the conceptualization of internalization used in this dissertation according to Deci and Ryan's self-determination theory, a few thoughts on religious identity, education, and indoctrination seem to be appropriate. For some the notion of religious internalization may raise the dreaded specter of indoctrination. After all, for such cynics, religious traditions are only interested in their own self-perpetuation by creating believers. The only sort of education that can be associated with religion in a secular humanistic paradigm is one that must first objectify religion and then teach *about* it. Whereas teaching *about* religion is compatible with secular

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[21] Abdallah Sahin, *New Directions in Islamic Education: Pedagogy & Identity Formation* (*Western Muslims and the Future of Islam* (Leicestershire: Kube Publishing Ltd., 2013), 11.

epistemologies, teaching *of* religion, that is, teaching for acceptance and commitment to the religion is not considered education but indoctrination.[22]

The detractors of religious education assume a clear distinction between education and indoctrination. That is, for these individuals these two terms carry two separate meanings that allow a phenomenon to be clearly designated as either education or indoctrination. Moreover, what is usually designated as education, such as the teaching of the natural sciences, does not always stand clear of the elements associated with indoctrination. It is important to note that the term indoctrination was not always used as a pejorative. In fact, a little over a century ago it was used in a positive sense to mean teaching of a set of ideas which was consistent with its etymological meaning, "to imbue with an idea or opinion."[23] However, with the rise of the natural sciences and the scientific method, displacing theology, philosophy, and law in the academy, there seems to have been a desire to distinguish between the contents and methods of the new science and these other disciplines. During this time, logical positivism as a philosophical movement embraced the principle of verification which essentially was used in scientific empiricism to define knowledge. Logical positivism posited that religious doctrines, including the existence of God were not just false, but neither verifiable nor falsifiable, and thus 'cognitively meaningless.'[24] There are two points worthy of note here. First, the rise of the term indoctrination in its pejorative sense seems to be linked 1) to the desire to distinguish between the purported objectivity of science and its methods on one hand, and religion and its doctrines

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[22] Elmer J. Thiessen, "Indoctrination and Religion Education," *Interchange*, 15(3) (1984), 28.

[23] *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology*, ed. T.F. Hoad, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), Accessed Online.

[24] See Harold Netland, *Encountering Religious Pluralism: The Challenge to Christian Faith and Mission* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press USA, 2001), 161-162.

on the other, and 2) to the supposed etymological connection between doctrine and indoctrination.[25] Second, because religious doctrines could not be verified logically nor empirically, they held no cognitive value. The truth claims inherent in religious doctrines were actually 'pseudostatements' and could thus only serve emotional purposes but not rational. Cognition and rationality thus came to characterize education, whereas affect and emotive manipulation were hallmarks of indoctrination.

It follows from these two points that education, for critics of religious education, can be distinguished from indoctrination on the basis of critical thinking that exists in the former and is absent in the latter. Warren Nord and Charles Haynes explain the difference between education and indoctrination in the following terms: "We indoctrinate children (or adults) when we teach (or socialize) them to accept doctrines, or a point of view, *uncritically*. By contrast, we educate children when we provide them with a measure of critical distance on their subjects, enabling them to think in informed and reflective ways about alternatives."[26] However, if the criterion that distinguishes education from indoctrination is critical thinking, one may ask whether critical thinking is present in much of what is generally assumed under the moniker of education. In fact, many have argued that much of the education common to all human beings such as language acquisition, reading, writing, speaking, basic arithmetic, and basic science have little, if anything at all, to do with critical thinking.[27] Students are expected to take certain information as granted and not question its validity. If a student asks why Arabic numbers are

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[25] See Elmer J. Thiessen, "Indoctrination and Religion Education," *Interchange*, 15(3) (1984), 27, 31.

[26] Warren A. Nord and Charles C. Haynes, *Taking Religion Seriously Across the Curriculum* (Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1998), 42.

[27] See Ibid. See also Barry Chazan, "'Indoctrination' and Religious Education," *Religious Education*, 67(4) (1972), 245.

read from left to right, we could offer little rational support other than invoke convention –

that's just how it's done. For this reason some people prefer to use the terms 'socialization,'

'training,' and 'conditioning,' to refer to such activities. But why not use the term

'indoctrination' to designate these activities as well? After all, critical thinking and free choice

are conspicuously absent in such 'educational' endeavors as well. Is 'indoctrination' exclusively

used for matters pertaining to religion just as it seems today that the term 'terrorism' is used

exclusively for acts of violence perpetrated by Muslims?

To make better sense of the nature of indoctrination and thus distinguish it from

education, philosophers of education have identified three characteristics that can serve as

criteria for indoctrination. That is, indoctrination can be understood in terms of the *methods*

used to secure a student's assent, the actual *content* that is being taught, and the *intent* and

desired outcomes that underlie the activity.[28] This tripartite - methods, content,

intent/consequence - perspective of indoctrination is a helpful analytical tool that allows one to

make sense of the seemingly amorphous concept of indoctrination. It is worth noting that some

find the notion of indoctrination sufficiently amorphous and thus render it cognitively

meaningless, much like logical positivism's treatment of religious doctrines.[29] However, as

unclear as the distinction between education and indoctrination may seem, history shows that

certain types of teaching and learning do stymie progress in the field and therefore the charge

of indoctrination should be taken seriously.

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[28] Barry Chazan, "'Indoctrination' and Religious Education," *Religious Education*, 67(4) (1972), 244-6.
[29] See e.g., Elmer J. Thiessen, "Indoctrination and Religion Education," *Interchange*, 15(3) (1984), 27.

Let us now turn to the question of method. For many, indoctrination is not about what is being taught, but rather *how* it is being taught. In this respect, indoctrination "refers to the transmission of contents to the young via undesirable or distasteful *methods*."[30] The element of '*uncritical* acceptance' in the common definition of indoctrination as we saw earlier stresses the method involved in indoctrination. That is, the terms 'critical' and 'uncritical' characterize the ways and *methods* of teaching. Examples of undesirable and uncritical methods include the exclusion and/or misrepresentation of alternatives, inclusion of only that information that supports the desired position, distorted reasoning, non-evidential teaching, rote memorization, emotional appeal, appeal to authority.[31] Although some of these methods would earn the ire of religious educators as well such as exclusion and misrepresentation of alternatives/facts, distorted reasoning, and disregarding or omitting evidence in the construction of arguments, it seems though that other methods such as rote memorization, emotional appeal, and appeal to authority are not in and of themselves problematic. Rote memorization, if integrated into a more holistic educational experience involving comprehension and analysis may in fact be the antidote to many of the problems of modern education which some have characterized as that which "is left after we have forgotten all the specifics we were taught in school."[32] Likewise, emotional appeal, if the term involves teacher conviction and selfhood, is also not problematic as is suggested. In fact Stephen Brookfield, Parker Palmer, bell hooks and several other educationists have powerfully demonstrated the importance of teachers locating themselves

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[30] Barry Chazan, "'Indoctrination' and Religious Education," *Religious Education*, 67(4) (1972), 244.

[31] See Ibid. and Elmer J. Thiessen, "Indoctrination and Religion Education," *Interchange*, 15(3) (1984), 36.

[32] Ed. Lorin W. Anderson and David R. Krathwohl, *A Taxonomy for Learning, Teaching, and Assessing: A Revision of Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives* (New York: Addison Wesley Longman, Inc., 2001), 244

relative to the subject-matter and expressing their convictions.[33] As for appeals to authority, Brookfield makes the distinction between authoritarian teaching which "imposes its will by the sheer force of tradition or institutional power" and authoritative teaching which "imposes its will through the credibility, trust, and authenticity teachers establish in students' eyes."[34] That teachers are endowed with authority is an inescapable condition of teaching. In fact, "a vast amount of what the teacher claims to know is taken on trust, is believed on the basis of authority."[35] However, the teacher must be conscious, whether teaching religion or in another discipline, of not supporting arguments solely on the basis of traditionalism. I should note that the discourse of traditionalism and authority requires an epistemological analysis to determine how knowledge is constructed, which is better left for a different type of paper. In the final analysis, it should be noted that authority is a universal characteristic that has the potential of both positive (e.g. modeling) and negative (e.g. 'banking') relations with learning.

Indoctrination can also be conceptualized according to *what* is being taught, that is, the *content* itself. Proponents who use this approach realize the limits of the *methods* approach in that much of what is found as acceptable education involves the use of non-rational, non-critical methods such as learning a language, the basics skills of reading, writing, and math, toilet training, or learning to be on-time. In such areas, imitation, direct instruction, drills, and memorization prevail while critical thinking is deemed largely unhelpful. To exclude such areas

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[33] See e.g., Stephen D. Brookfield, *The Skillful Teacher: On Technique, Trust, and Responsiveness in the Classroom* (San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2006), 65. Parker Palmer, *The Courage to Teach* (San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2007), 9-33. bell hooks, *Teaching Critical Thinking: Practical Wisdom* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 147-152.

[34] Stephen D. Brookfield, *The Skillful Teacher: On Technique, Trust, and Responsiveness in the Classroom* (San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2006), 177-8.

[35] Elmer J. Thiessen, "Indoctrination and Religion Education," *Interchange*, 15(3) (1984), 37.

from the purview of indoctrination (and thus designate such activities as socialization, training, or conditioning) the content approach stresses the difference between the relatively limited activities of learning a language or learning to use a toilet and the teaching of ideas that revolve around human existence and worldview.[36] The logic of the content argument goes: if the nature of the subject-matter is limited and does not constitute a comprehensive belief system, then teaching does not constitute indoctrination; however, religion, by virtue of its interest in that which nothing greater can be conceived, seeks to bring all of life within its purview and plays a paradigmatic role by rendering value judgments and assigning meaning according to its own definitions and logic. Because religion is essentially paradigmatic and seeks to explain life, human existence, and the universe, as opposed to content that deals with swimming or writing, it therefore can only sustain itself through indoctrination. However, this contestation does not present a rational argument but rather a modernistic prejudice towards religion and philosophy. It is true that teaching religion is not like teaching swimming, partly because religion is qualitatively different than swimming, and it is true that religion has more explanatory power than swimming, but there is no rational reason to reserve the term indoctrination for content that purports to explain life.

Finally, some hold that the defining characteristic of indoctrination is not *what* is taught or *how* it is taught, but rather *why* it is taught. According to this view, indoctrination "refers to the desire to implant unshakeable beliefs in others… The true indoctrinator, then, is distinguished by his illiberal and authoritarian intention."[37] It is important to note that the

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[36] Barry Chazan, "'Indoctrination' and Religious Education," *Religious Education*, 67(4) (1972), 244-5.
[37] Ibid., 245.

intent to implant content in order to secure acceptance seems to assume deprivation of autonomous judgment. That is, if teaching is directed to effect students' adoption of content as their own, it is assumed that in the process their own free, rational choice is sacrificed. In teaching religion, the aim is for students to develop faith commitments and conviction. According to this view, such an intent would yield the designation of indoctrination. As mentioned earlier, the only way for religious education to escape this logic would be to teach *about* religion and not for any confessional purpose. However, this view of indoctrination can also be problematized. First, it is true that there are a host of educational activities that are not open to rational, autonomous choice. Language and traffic laws come to mind. Second, it seems plausible to conceive of teaching that aims to form commitment and conviction without sacrificing autonomy.

Although what has been put forward is a tripartite analysis of indoctrination, it is generally true that many do not approach such criteria as either-or, that is, as mutually exclusive perspectives, but rather that indoctrination encompasses certain methods that limit choice, certain content that professes a worldview, and a certain intention that seeks to implant such content incontrovertibly. Indoctrination is thus an "attempt to authoritatively and unquestioningly impose on others beliefs and belief systems whose acceptance really should be rooted in the agent's own free and rational acceptance."[38] However, this framework need not exclusively apply to religious education, in fact one can make a strong case that nationalism, secular humanism, liberalism, socialism, and scientism are at least as vulnerable.

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[38] Ibid., 251.

It should first be acknowledged that socialization, training, and conditioning are part of the universal make-up of the human. Rational assent and autonomy have very little to do with a child's beginning stages of development.[39] We are all trained, socialized, and conditioned by various forces, whether our parents, societies, dominant ideologies, the second we enter this world. We have no choice nor autonomy and it is not clear when such a moment arrives or should arrive. Children who are not socialized into a specific religion are still products of socialization. Their consciousness and value system may be informed by secular humanism, liberalism or some other hegemonic system. Moreover, as a related point, it is difficult to deny that education involves both cognitive and affective intentions. To think that education is exclusively concerned with developing critical thinking skills and analytical abilities would be naïve. John Dewey hinted at the importance of emotion and feeling in education when he remarked, "what avail is it to win prescribed amounts of information about geography and history, to win ability to read and write, if in the process the individual loses his own soul: loses his appreciation of things worth while…"[40] Bloom and his colleagues highlighted the importance of affect in education in 1964 in the immensely useful Handbook II: Affective Domain as part of their *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives*. As a complement to the first handbook that dealt with the cognitive domain, this second handbook, lays out a framework describing and organizing affective states that educators aim for along a continuum of internalization. That is, they identified stages of internalization ranging from a student merely being aware of a stimuli,

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[39] It is interesting to note that even this sentiment may be understated. See for example Heitink who states, "humans are less rational than was commonly assumed. From the earliest phases of life, human behavior is largely determined by emotional factors. What is called rationality is in fact often a rationalization of emotional needs and desires." Gerben Heitink, *Practical Theology: History, Theory, Action Domains* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdman's Publishing Company, 1999), 32.

[40] John Dewey, *Experience & Education* (New York: Touchstone, 1997), 49.

to an intermediate level of a student forming a commitment and conviction of the idea the teacher is attempting to sensitize the student to, to the highest level of internalization that he calls 'characterization,' in which a philosophy of life, *weltanshauung*, emerges and ones thinking, feelings, and behaviors consistently demonstrates embodiment of this worldview.[41] Some of the affective educational objectives they devised are: 'student should have faith in the power of reason and in the methods of experience and discussion,' and 'students should be devoted to those ideas and ideals which are the foundation of democracy.' Both of these objectives correlate to the taxonomical level of commitment 3.3.[42] These objectives evince how affect can be incorporated in education.

Blooms handbook on affective objectives when used in tandem with the cognitive handbook seems especially instructive for religious education. Since they acknowledge the presence of both cognitive and affective aims in education, religious educationists can develop a framework and trajectory of a religious educational experience that ensures that the desire 'to implant content unshakeably,' although a valid affective objective is not at the expense of a critical assessment of that content. The two are not mutually exclusive. In fact, if teaching religion is about, or partly about, developing "a more durable young adult identity capable of establishing… 'commitments in an uncertain world,'"[43] then we must realize that such internalization of the belief and value system is only possible through a cognitive and affective process that employs critical thought and creates room for listening to vying propositions.

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[41] For a summary see David R. Krathwohl, Benjamin S. Bloom, and Bertram B. Masia, *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: The Classification of Educational Goals* (London: Longmans, 1964), 34-7.

[42] Ibid., 150-3.

[43] James P. Keen "Young Adult Development, Religious Identity, and Interreligious Solidarity in an Interfaith Learning Community," in *Building the Interfaith Youth Movement*, ed. Eboo Patel, Patrice Brodeur, (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2006), 30.

Although the term conviction implies a certain affective level of internalization and ownership, it is important to remember that convictions are "not just emotional statements or personal feelings; they are believed to have real cognitive content."[44] In other words, a true deep faith inheres through a process of commitment and critique. Faith that is not appraised through a critical eye can hardly propel an individual to the deepest levels of internalization and volition. Likewise, faith that is studied only academically, through a cognitive-centric approach will fail to provide deep meaning needed to create a consistent and dynamic character.

Unlike indoctrination, the concept of internalization offers a richer and more meaningful construct by which we can understand how external demands and regulations are adopted and integrated into a person's sense of self. Not to mention the negative connotation of the term 'indoctrination' makes it well-nigh impossible to have a fruitful discussion as to why people behave the way they do, and especially the motives and behaviors of religious individuals.[45] Moreover, indoctrination is usually studied in the context of education while the concept of internalization applies quite fittingly to education as demonstrated by Bloom's taxonomy in the affective domain but is also quite instructive in other areas of life. The notion of internalization, especially as conceptualized in the theory of self-determination, I believe, offers a robust and wide-angle perspective that carefully considers several elements that are often conflictual such as freedom and control. As a pervasive theory and framework, the concept of internalization, as

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[44] James L. Heft, "Learned Ignorance: An Introduction," in *Learned Ignorance*, ed. James L. Heft, S.M., Reuven Firestone, and Omid Safi, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, Inc., 2011), 3.

[45] In this respect it is interesting to note B.F. Skinner's perspective on the inability of education to effectively control behavior and when other methods are proven to be more effective, they are labeled with a pejorative such as "brain-washing." The same can be said for the term, "indoctrination." The term "internalization" and the concept it represents especially in self-determination theory offers a more charitable space for human agency which Skinner too easily derides. See B.F. Skinner, "Freedom and Control," in *Skinner for the Classroom* ed. Robert Epstein, (Champaign: Research Press, 1982), 143.

we shall see shortly, is capable of engaging religious content and meanings in a dynamic and symbiotic relationship that goes beyond merely mapping on to the religious domain. In this dissertation I seek to provide the conceptual groundwork for substantive and critical engagement between the concepts of SDT and Islamic discourse. This groundwork comprises understanding SDT and OIT on its own terms as psychological theories of motivation and internalization, closely examining the methods by which Islam can be dialogically related to the concepts of SDT and OIT, and actually relating cardinal conceptual anchors of SDT, with a specific focus on its theory of human nature and autonomy, to proximal concepts in Islamic scripture. By fleshing out these ideas and creating this groundwork, I hope to build on it with future research that mutually and critically correlates SDT and Islam on issues around the internalizability of Islamic content, the meta-discourse on proximal and pervasive contexts, individual and situational differences, and particular strategies facilitating internalization of Islamic beliefs, values and regulations. This dissertation represents the first step in what I hope to be a lifetime of fulfilling work.

Chapter 2: How to Study Religious Internalization – Theory & Literature Review

How to study religious internalization – Theory of Self-Determination

The sections above explored why studying religious internalization is important. We now turn to the question, 'how best can we study and understand religious internalization?' This question will be answered in two ways. First, in terms of a substantive construct explored by reviewing the literature on self-determination theory as it relates to religion. Second, in terms of method. The first question will be dealt with in this chapter, and the second in the following chapter.

To study religious internalization necessitates a substantive intellectual construct that seeks to explain what internalization is, how it functions, and what it produces. The question of internalization and its correlates such as socialization are taken up in many different fields and discourses. In studies on faith formation, many theologians and religious thinkers proffer developmental models and frameworks that explain stages of religiosity along an implied continuum of internalization. Perhaps the most notable from these genera in Western literature is James Fowler's book, *Stages of Faith* where he identifies six stages people may transition through to develop a mature faith.[1]

While these models and frameworks help explain the development and transformation of faith in terms of a lifecycle, they do not systematically elucidate the processes by which a person comes to value something as their own. In the fields of philosophy of religion and psychology of religion, internationalization is an important concept that is captured and

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[1] James W. Fowler, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning*, 1st ed. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981).

explained in different ways and from the perspective of different religious traditions. However insightful these conceptual treatments may be (such as those of Phillips and Allport), they do not offer a cogent and systematic theory of how a person adopts a value, belief, or attitude as their own.

Systematic and comprehensive theories of internalization seem to be found mainly in the field of psychology. While Ryan and Connell claim that "theories of internalization can be found among diverse schools of thought and fields of study,"[1] they only reference works in psychology and a few in sociology. This may be due to the fact that a *theory* of internalization has yet to be developed in other field of studies. This does not mean that there are no conceptual or qualitative treatments of internalization in these other fields, but that a systematic conceptualization that includes fundamental principles, assumptions, hypotheses, observations, and research is not necessarily present as a whole within these other fields. While works on internalization in the field of sociology may offer a systematic treatment of internalization, in the field of psychology works on internalization seem to consider the phenomenon with greater breadth and depth that include discourses on human nature, drives and needs, and internal psychological processes. As a psychological phenomenon, internalization can be conceptualized and located at a nexus of cognitive and affective processes that take place within the individual as it acts with its environment. In other words, by analyzing internalization through a psychological framework, we're able to inquire and investigate what is happening inside a person as it interacts with the environment. For the

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[1] Richard M. Ryan and James P. Connell, "Perceived Locus of Causality and Internalization: Examining Reasons for Acting in Two Domains," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 57, no. 5 (1989), 750.

purposes of studying religious internalization, a theory of internalization that first considers the internal psychological processes operating within the individual can help shed light on how individuals come to believe and integrate a variety of external doctrines and practices at different stages of development. This is important as faith and religiosity is not a static feature in the believer's life, but something that often involves deeper reflection after being wholly adopted at an earlier age.

While there are many different theories of internalization within the field of psychology, self-determination theory (SDT) seems to offer the most robust and generative context within which to study internalization. In fact, one of the most attractive features of SDT is its extensive explanatory power generated by focusing on 1) psychological needs, 2) content, 3) social contexts, and 4) process of internalization. While other theories focus on internalization with limited conceptual breadth, SDT explores and conceptualizes internalization as a process that relates social and intra-psychological phenomenon, capturing and explaining the complex interplay between basic human needs, content (in terms of what is or desired to be internalized), and proximal and pervasive social contexts. It should be noted that early in its history, researchers and theorists were concerned mostly with psychological processes occurring in the individual and the application of theory in different domains of life. Most of the early discourse sought to explain the psychological needs of competence, relatedness, and autonomy, and intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Not much deference was given to content, that is, the nature of the regulation, value, or behavior to be internalized nor to the role of broader social contexts. This dearth was addressed significantly by the publication of Deci and Ryan's comprehensive text in 2017 that thematically reviews a considerable amount of the

extant literature to-date and contains separate chapters on content and pervasive contexts.[2]

These recent addenda are significant insofar as they provide a fuller conceptual lens that can

carefully take account of the nature of religious content and the degree to which it is

internalizable, and the myriad pervasive contexts (both liberal and traditional) that religious

attitudes emerge from and subsist in.

   To be precise, self-determination is a theory of motivation. That is, it seeks to explain

the *why* of behavior.[3] Within the framework and upon the premises of SDT, Deci and Ryan

propose a "mini-theory" they call "organismic integration theory" (OIT) that addresses

internalization and integration as a continuum.[4] Of the various theories of internalization, OIT in

conjunction with SDT offer a wide explanatory range not only in terms of its application (of

which there are many) but also in terms of its ontological cogency. Whereas other theories and

frameworks of internalization may offer more nuanced classifications such as Krathwohl's et

al.'s taxonomy of educational affective objectives which operates on a continuum based on

internalization,[5] SDT and OIT situate the concept of internalization as process that interrelates

human nature and its constituent psychological drives with external regulations. Moreover, OIT

proposes its own framework and taxonomy as it is inextricably connected with the discourse on

human psychological needs. SDT and OIT provide a richer context of understanding how

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[2] See Ryan and Deci, *Self-Determination Theory: Basic Psychological Needs in Motivation, Development, and Wellness* (New York: Guilford Press, 2017).

[3] Edward L. Deci and Richard M. Ryan, *Intrinsic Motivation and Self-Determination in Human Behavior* (New York: Plenum, 1985), 3.

[4] Richard M. Ryan and Edward L. Deci, *Self-Determination Theory: Basic Psychological Needs in Motivation, Development, and Wellness* (New York: Guilford Press, 2017), 179-215.

[5] David R. Krathwohl, Benjamin S. Bloom, and Bertram B. Masia, *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: The Classification of Educational Goals; Handbook II; Affective Domain* (London: Longmans, 1964), 95-174.

internalization works, and one that allows us to better understand the functioning of religious

internalization.

Psychological Needs

In order to understand Deci and Ryan's theory of internalization (as it functions within

OIT), one must first understand how they explain behavior. Critical of the assumption that

behavior is a product of the interaction between physiological drives and the environment, Deci

and Ryan operate on the assumption that the nature of the human is volitional; the human

being is active and initiates behavior.[6] The human organism is not just made up of physiological

drives (such as hunger, thirst, sex, avoidance of pain) that simply force it to react to stimuli in

the environment, but also intrinsic needs that act on the environment. These intrinsic needs

provide volitional control to the organism to manage the drives. The difference between

physiological drives and intrinsic (psychological) needs is important. Physiological drives

"involve a deficit or need in a deficit or need in body tissues outside the nervous system and

energize behaviors that result in a consummatory response that reduces the deficit and

produces learning."[7] Moreover, physiological drives operate cyclically in which once the drive is

satisfied it no longer impinges on the organism, but after some time elapses it reassert itself.

Intrinsic needs, however, are not cyclical and are not based on tissue deficit. Intrinsic needs are

not limited to motivating behavior that merely manages the drives, but intrinsic needs give rise

to behavior to satisfy its own needs. Evidence for intrinsic needs is proffered if we recognize

that even when drives are well satisfied, the human organism still tends to become

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[6] Deci and Ryan, *Intrinsic Motivation and Self-Determination in Human Behavior*, 3.
[7] Ibid., 16.

uncomfortable and desirous. So, for example, studies have shown that prolonged periods of

stimulus deprivation, although drives were well satisfied, resulted in substantial discomfort and

longing.[8]

The notion of needs is a claim about human nature that is itself susceptible to

variegated cultural conceptualizations. It may seem like a truism to hold that "...living things

have *needs* [emphasis original] that, when fulfilled, sustain and fortify their persistence and

thriving."[9] However, while Deci and Ryan define needs as "fundamental nutrients or supports

that individuals must have to thrive," they recognize that this concept of needs "is both

complex and controversial."[10] Moreover, Deci and Ryan assert not only that living things have

needs but argue for the validity of *basic* needs which involves making claims "about both

universality and priority and suggested commonalities in terms of human nature."[11] Part of the

complexity of positing basic psychological needs is differentiating it from a host of other

categories meant to flesh out and explain human nature, including physical needs, drives,

instincts, wants, preferences, and desires. The project of positing basic human needs is first and

foremost an attempt at defining human nature. This point is important insofar as concepts

around human nature are found within religious traditions as well and thus represent perhaps

the first relational engagement of competing viewpoints between SDT and Islamic knowledge.

In somewhat of an irony, the complexity and controversial nature of making claims of

human nature and basic psychological needs do not thwart Deci and Ryan from insisting on the

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[8] Ibid., 20.
[9] See Ryan and Deci, *Self-Determination Theory: Basic Psychological Needs in Motivation, Development, and Wellness*, 80.
[10] Ibid., 81.
[11] Ibid.

objectivity and universality of basic needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. The

identification of a basic need is determined in terms of the effects of fulfillment and

deprivation. The fulfillment of a need, that is, obtaining certain resources, nutrients, and

supports permits the organism to "preserve, maintain, and enhance [its] existence" while

deprivation of these resources, nutrients, and supports "results in degraded forms of growth

and impaired integrity, that is, leads to serious harms."[12] These two elements help distinguish

needs from desires, preferences, and wants since satisfaction of these latter motivational

dispositions may not promote preservation, maintenance, or thriving of the organism, and their

deprivation may not lead to adverse development or well-being. These two elements also allow

Deci and Ryan to claim that basic needs are objective. Objectivity here means the empirical and

measurable observation of positive functional effects and benefit (greater well-being and

thriving) when the need is satisfied and negative functional effects and harm (ill-being) when

the need is deprived, frustrated, or neglected.[13] In other words, basic psychological needs are

objective since the specific effects respective to fulfillment and deprivation "obtain regardless

of one's subjective goals or values."[14] When these needs are satisfied we can always empirically

observe and measure positive health and well-being and when they are thwarted we can

always empirically observe and measure negative health and ill-being.

Along with objectivity of basic psychological needs, Deci and Ryan argue that the three

basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness are also universal. In fact,

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[12] Ibid.,
[13] Ibid., 10, 82, 85.
[14] Ibid., 10.

universality is another criterion to determine a basic need.[15] In order for a need to qualify as a

basic need, it must be demonstrated "that it is essential across developmental periods and

across cultural contexts."[16] The universality of a need is a bold claim about a fixed human

nature that prevails irrespective of a variety of differences, whether those differences are based

on race, culture, gender, sex, socio-economic status, religion. In other words, "psychological

needs are an invariant aspect of human makeup and thus apply to all humans in all cultures."[17]

While the psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness apply to each and

every human being according to SDT, Deci and Ryan point out that this does not mean that "all

individuals or cultural groups will equally value, satisfy, or recognize needs or that all individuals

are equally well equipped to attain need fulfillment."[18] This qualification helps clarify the nature

of these basic psychological needs and shows that individuals and cultures may differentially

value and satisfy these needs. However, it also brings into question the validity of an objective

and universal nature of basic psychological needs since, if they are not recognized or recognized

differently within diverse cultures, then to what degree of confidence can it be maintained that

SDT's conceptualization represents an objective and universal standard to which the level of

satisfaction of individuals from distinct cultures are measured against? It is important to note

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[15] In *Self-Determination Theory: Basic Psychological Needs in Motivation, Development, and Wellness*, Deci and Ryan discuss Maumeister and Leary's nine criteria for identifying a basic psychological need. These nine are: 1) The satisfaction of the need should produce positive effects readily under all but adverse conditions; 2) its satisfaction should have affective consequences; 3) a need should direct cognitive processing; 4) thwarting a need should lead to negative effects on health or well-being; 5) needs should elicit or organize goal-oriented behaviors designed to satisfy them; 6) a need should be universal; 7) that it not be derivative of other motives; 8) that it have impact across a broad array of behaviors; 9) and that it have implications beyond immediate psychological functioning." According to Deci and Ryan, the psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness satisfy all nine criteria and these criteria are so restrictive as to arguably limit psychological needs to just three. See pgs. 85-86.
[16] Ibid., 85.
[17] Ibid., 88.
[18] Ibid.

here that the notion of basic psychological needs and identifying certain basic needs is a conceptual construct as Deci and Ryan admit, and one that is based on a deductive and inductive process.[19] Moreover, if human nature itself is reduced to physical/physiological needs as described earlier and the psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness, and well-being and ill-being are measured empirically, there may be a risk that a cultural bias toward secularism and naturalism/materialism, for example, exists in the construct to begin with. In the universe of what constitutes human nature, psychological needs may represent only a partial truth of our complex makeup. Whether the entire gamut of human behavior and motivation can be explained by physical needs and the psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness is worth examining more closely.[20] This issue will be taken up in more detail in chapter four as we examine the more controversial construct of autonomy as a human need and interrelate it to the notion of submission in Islam.

According to Deci and Ryan the need for self-determination among intrinsic needs represents the cardinal force in their theory of motivation. The concept of self-determination captures the individual's intense and perpetual desire to be in control of his/her fate; to have one's will actualized in the environment. The need for self-determination is better explained by analyzing its three constituent parts: the need for competence, the need for autonomy, and the need for relatedness.

Autonomy

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[19] Ibid., 87.

[20] To be clear, Deci and Ryan believe the psychological needs are limited to the three needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. See Ryan and Deci, *Self-Determination Theory: Basic Psychological Needs in Motivation, Development, and Wellness*, 86.

The need for autonomy is so central to self-determination that it may prove difficult to differentiate the two in the literature. The need for autonomy refers to the innate desire of having "our own wishes, rather than external rewards or pressures, determine our actions."[21] Many people who feel disenfranchised complain of not being able to choose their conduct or not being able to see the effects of one's thoughts and actions manifest in society. Askawa and Csikszentmihalyi use the terms "self-initiation" and "self-regulation" of one's behavior to explain the term autonomy.[22] The notion of autonomy is dependent on the idea of the self as an integrated whole (at least paradigmatically). The need to be capable of regulating the self and endorsing one's own views, values, and behaviors assumes a wholeness in organization and integration of a true self. We will touch more on the notion of an integrated and true self in chapter four.

It can be said that the two main characteristics of autonomy are *choice* and *volition*. The capacity and need to choose, that is to have one's voice (i.e. will) dictate one's action in the environment and its own organism (as opposed to environmental factors or even physiological drives dictating one's action), and consequently the environment itself, is a psychological need that is often suppressed. Choice can involve the exercise of control or giving it up, so long as the locus of causality is internal. In this respect, autonomy is differentiated from independence. The feeling of volition that comes with the ability to choose and through those choices control the outcome is an affective quality. Since the organism interacts with the environment, in reality one's behavior is always influenced by environmental forces (and thus there is a constant

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[21] Anita Woolfolk, *Educational Psychology: International Edition*, 12th ed. (Boston: Pearson, 2013), 435.
[22] Kiyoshi Asakawa and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, "Feelings of Connectedness and Internalization of Values in Asian American Adolescents," *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 29, no. 2 (2000): 121-45.

negotiation of the self towards further integration and wholeness assuming a paradigmatic relationship). There can be no such thing as an organism exercising and satisfying an absolute need for autonomy, but this need reflects the internal *feeling* the organism experiences, that is, one needs to *feel* that one's outcomes and environment are determined by choices. Deci and Ryan clarify that choice need not be thought of as a deliberate cognitive act, and that the experience of *flow* articulated by Csikszentmihalyi, in which a person is completely engaged in activity, is an exercise of the need for autonomy.[23] If, however, one acts out of internal or external pressures, which is phenomenally experienced as controlling, this constitutes the opposite of autonomy, or heteronomy.

Competence

Concerning the need for competence, Deci and Ryan explain, "to be self-determining one must have the skills to manage various elements of one's environment"[24] and bend them towards one's will. The need for competence "refers to feeling effective in one's interactions with the social environment – that is, experiencing opportunities and supports for the exercise, expansion, and expression of one's capacities and talents."[25] Our efficacy in the world would be severely hampered if we do not understand or have a distorted sense of the world and how to attain our intended goals therein. The skill or know-how would be context-specific depending on the nature of the goals and the challenges posed by the environment. Interestingly, Deci and Ryan seem to emphasize the affective quality of competency more so than its cognitive

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[23] Deci and Ryan, *Intrinsic Motivation and Self-Determination in Human Behavior*, 28-9.
[24] Ibid., 30.
[25] Ryan and Deci, *Self-Determination Theory: Basic Psychological Needs in Motivation, Development, and Wellness*, 86.

counterpart. Feeling competent is both a result and a cause of effective functioning in the environment.

The early childhood activities of learning, play, exploration and the physical actions of walking, manipulating objects, and speech derive their energy from the intrinsic psychological need for competence. Functionally, the need for competence allows the organism to manage the environment, and phenomenally, "feelings of effectance nourish people's selves, whereas feelings of ineffectance threaten their feelings of agency and undermine their ability to mobilize and organize actions."[26] Hopelessness and helplessness arises from the inability to influence and effect change on the world outside ourselves. Developing skills, understanding, and mastery are competence-based motivations that enable the individual not only to influence the environment but also feel satisfaction and ownership when s/he succeeds.

Like all psychological needs, the psychological need for competence informs us of an ontological reality of the world which in turn helps us grasp the significance of the need itself. If there is any constant feature that characterizes our existence, it is that we are neurologically and biologically beings of meaning. Even without elaborate schemata, paradigms, and theories, our very nature; our most essential neural networks and electrical circuitry, force us to make sense of things. So strong is this force to make our interactions meaningful, when presented with inchoate objects, our minds, strongly predisposed to search for meaning, swiftly recognize the lack thereof. The primacy of this need is stated well by Nicholas Rescher: "The urge to make sense of things is too deeply ingrained in our nature – as a human need rather than merely a

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[26] Ibid., 95.

human want."[27] We cannot escape from being beings of meaning which has a direct correlation with the need for competence, and thus from the unconscious center this force directs out to govern our conscious interactions. Our biological predisposition toward meaning gives us hope in human agency.

Relatedness

The need for relatedness constitutes the third element in self-determination theory. Whereas the need for autonomy concerns the desire of the organism to exercise choice and volition independent from external pressures and forces, the need for relatedness concerns the organism's desire to belong to a social community and "establish close emotional bonds and attachments with others."[28] To be completely fluid and meaningful, individually, and in society, or in other words, to be truly self-determined, one seeks out meaningful relationships with agents of the environment (or external elements). However, it appears relatedness also pertains to relating organismic tendencies (between needs and/or drives) that may be incongruent since self-determination implies a certain wholeness of the self. The need for relatedness (perhaps in conjunction with other needs subsumed under self-determination or other than it) seeks to relate within and between internal and external structures to form a whole, united, harmonious constitution of the self.[29]

In terms of social relations, the need for relatedness is a cardinal demand of the human organism to feel attached to others. The need involves both seeking connectedness and

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[27] Nicholas Rescher, "Does Pluralism Lead to Skepticism or Syncretism," *Pluralism: Against the Demand for Consensus* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 90.

[28] Woolfolk, *Educational Psychology*, 436.

[29] Deci and Ryan, *Intrinsic Motivation and Self-Determination in Human Behavior*, 144-5.

belonging with others as well as providing connections and caring for others. This bi-directional need includes "feel[ing] responded to, respected, and important to others, and conversely, to avoid rejection, insignificance, and disconnectedness, a fact that applies not just to humans but other primates as well."[30] Much of human behavior, whether it be forms of dress, aesthetic choices, or performance of social rituals is a function of the need for relatedness. Individuals often behave, whether consciously or not, in a manner to secure acceptance and approval and symbiotically take interest in what others say or do. This does not mean that individuals will only behave in a manner conforming to the expectations and demands of others. After all, the need for autonomy and competence and their expressions are in continual negotiation both within the organismic space of need expression and the environment. Nonetheless, the human need to feel like one matters and is cared for by at least a few others and, reciprocally, to care for and accept others is crucial to the process of internalization. Deci and Ryan point out, "the need to relate or belong is especially critical for understanding people's tendencies to internalize values and behaviors from their cultures."[31] When a child is brought into the world, it is socialized with the values of the parents as the initial and primary agents of socialization. The love and regard parents often give and a child experiences orient the behavior of the child to seek care, acceptance, approval, and belonging. Through this core relationship, a child typically relates to the broader culture of parents and internalizes the values and behaviors expected especially if the child feels the autonomous care received from those s/he values and can autonomously engage the different aspects of the culture.

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[30] Ryan and Deci, *Self-Determination Theory: Basic Psychological Needs in Motivation, Development, and Wellness*, 96.
[31] Ibid.

The modern condition may reflect more fragmentation and breakdown of the family

structure and hence these primary agents of internalization and socialization may no longer

wield the social status and authority they may have as in the past. The need for relatedness, in

spite of such social change, continues to drive and direct the energies of people in different

social contexts. In the technological age of instant and constant communication through social

media, children may sooner and more easily shed the connection with their parents (especially

if parents are preoccupied and no longer give the attention due to their children) and even

physically proximate friends, and instead replace them with virtual connections whom they

seek validation and acceptance from, usually in the form of "likes" or being "followed." The

need for relatedness may thus produce variegated expressions in different social and historical

contexts, but what remains true is the "readiness to adopt external views as part of [ones] own

psychic makeup."[32]

Content and Social Contexts

As mentioned earlier, Deci and Ryan's earlier book, *Intrinsic Motivation and Self-*

Determination in Human Behavior set forth the theory of self-determination with discourses on

psychological needs, intrinsic motivation, cognitive evaluation theory, organismic integration

theory and internalization, and causality orientations theory. Conspicuously absent from this

book is any discourse on content or context. While their earlier book did mention certain

controlling and autonomy-supportive practices to facilitate internalization, it was not until the

publication of the recent 2017 text, *Self-Determination Theory*, that we see a serious

consideration of the nature of the *content* and the social *contexts* mediating internalization. In

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[32] Ibid.

fact, in some ways, the earlier works on SDT left one wondering whether internalization is only

a process between intrinsic psychological needs and external demands made on an individual,

and whether the substantive content of the demand and the social contexts within which an

individual lives matter.

The answers to these questions were taken up in *Self-Determination Theory*. In terms of

content, Deci and Ryan clarified that the nature of content does, indeed, matter and that not all

content is equally and readily internalizable. They explain, "not all cultural or socially supported

values or regulations can be readily internalized, because some can be inherently contradictory

to or frustrating of basic need satisfactions."[33] They give examples of certain cultural or group

values that deny the right of the individual to pursue his/her interests and thus, this value is

opposed to the need for autonomy. Since this value is opposed to the need for autonomy, it

may be internalized, but only to the degree that it is introjected and never truly integrated (th

different types of internalization are discussed in the next section). Deci and Ryan provide other

clarification that helps conceptualize content in a more structural fashion as it is an integral part

of understanding the process of internalization. However, it seems as though the discourse on

content they formulate primarily relates the process of internalization in terms of whether

content is more or less compatible with the three psychological needs. In future writings I hope

to explore and build on the role of content in the process of internalization, both as it relates to

intrinsic psychological needs but also as it relates to the pre-existing schemata and the socially

constructed "nature" of a person (the latter which Deci and Ryan do not seem to address).

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[33] Ibid., 89.

In regards to context, Deci and Ryan devote two chapters on pervasive social contexts; one dealing with culture and the other with economic and political systems. The discourse on contexts presented in these chapters distinguish proximal contexts and pervasive contexts of which

> "the primary influence of these distal contexts is typically more indirect, as pervasive cultural norms or economic structures present "invisible" or implicit values, constraints, and affordances, which are then reflected in more proximal social conditions and conveyed by socializing agents from parents and teachers to cultural messengers such as religious leaders, politicians, and celebrities."[34]

The notion of pervasive contexts as a plausibility structure and proximal contexts as a more immediate socializing agent presents a dynamic construct that can enrich our view of how internalization works socially. In fact, without accounting for proximal and pervasive contexts, the concept of internalization can at best reflect but a distorted view of how individuals accept an external regulation or value (i.e. content) as their own. While Deci and Ryan mainly speak about social contexts in terms of their controlling and autonomy-affording elements, that is how certain aspects of these environments frustrate or facilitate autonomy, competence, and relatedness, the contexts discourse and construct can relate well to the process and dynamics of internalization.

Social contexts as a construct represent a reality that human development occurs within. While social contexts define ranges of choice and acceptable ways of being, individual differences also matter. The fact that a certain context is controlling, an individual residing in that context may not necessarily develop behaviors and attitudes that indicate the

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[34] Ibid., 562.

effectiveness of the controlling context, instead personality differences may permit some

individuals to interpret constraints in a manner that actually energize their autonomy. This is an

important point as religious internalization in the pervasive context of a secular, liberal society,

to be effective, may urge closer attention to the dynamics of individual differences that help

some to be resilient in the face of a countervailing or conflicting environment. I want to

acknowledge the importance of the role of content, context, and individual differences to the

process of internalization but inform the reader that these discourses will not be explored

much within this present work, instead I hope to focus on these issues in future writings.

Process and Model of Internalization

In the previous sections, I have discussed three main inputs of internalization. Firstly,

the intrinsic psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness postulate a certain

human nature and the process of "taking in" external regulations and values must account for

these intrinsic needs. Secondly, the substantive content, that is, the nature of the regulations

and values also play a role whether and to what extent they are internalizable/integratable.

Thirdly, internalization does not operate in a vacuum between the organism and the external

regulation and value, but rather, the context, both proximal and pervasive plays a significant

role in the process of internalization. In other words, internalization is a symbiotic function

between these three elements. In this section we briefly explore the process and model of

internalization.

Deci and Ryan's construct of internalization is developed within their mini-theory of

organismic integration theory (OIT). The process of taking an external regulation or value and

making it part of one's sense of self is better appreciated by highlighting the difference

between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Humanistic views towards motivation are predominantly based on assumptions of human nature as being active and volitional. Even as an infant, the human actively (without external stimulation) is curious about its surroundings. It acts on the environment by engaging and manipulating it; all this without any environmental stimuli. The psychological needs of the organism are the engine for intrinsic motivation. Woolfolk defines intrinsic motivation as "the natural human tendency to seek out and conquer challenges as we pursue personal interests and exercise our capabilities."[35] All three needs subsumed under self-determination seem to be present in this definition. Some add that intrinsically motivated behavior is "for nothing but the feeling of satisfaction and joy associated with the behavior itself."[36] The problem with this construction is that it suggests a causal relationship that makes pleasure the goal. It seems as though intrinsic motivation can be conceived of in two ways. First, as mentioned by Soenens and others, in which a person undertakes an activity or behaves in a certain matter *because* of the pleasure it affords. Second, in which a person acts not because of a desire to feel satisfaction or joy (in other words, pleasure is not the goal itself), but because of the inherent interest in the activity itself. In this case, the inherent interest in the activity, since it is based on an intrinsic need is expected to produce a sense of satisfaction at some level although not necessarily corporeal. This distinction does not come off so clearly in the literature, and may not be an easy one to maintain, but in the context of religious values seems appropriate. If a person is asked why s/he

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[35] Anita Woolfolk, *Educational Psychology: International Edition*, 12th ed. (Boston: Pearson, 2013), 431.

[36] Bart Soenens, et al., ""How Do Perceptions of God As Autonomy Supportive or Controlling Relate to Individuals' Social-Cognitive Processing of Religious Contents? The Role of Motives for Religious Behavior." *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion* 22, no. 1 (2012), 12.

chose to read on the subject of constitutional law, and if s/he responds, "because I really enjoy it" and says nothing more. We can probably infer the person was intrinsically motivated, but we don't know which of the two types of intrinsic motivation this response represents. Does s/he enjoy it because it causes satisfaction (and thus satisfaction was the goal – perhaps hard to believe for constitutional law), or is the activity itself inherently interesting and when undertaken produces a side-effect of a certain satisfaction?

Moreover, satisfaction, again, in a corporeal sense may not accompany intrinsically motivated behavior. I may read a constitutional law book because of my interest in the subject-matter or a certain curiosity concerning an issue taken up in the book, without necessarily feeling neither satisfaction nor joy. In fact, my activity may even be accompanied by emotions of discomfort and consternation. Nonetheless, my intrinsically motivated behavior probably involved some level of satisfaction – perhaps coming away with the realization that the issue was not addressed as I expected, and thus prompting me to continue my search. This begs the question whether acting based on the desire to feel satisfaction, joy, or excitement can truly be considered intrinsically motivated. Even if it may be regarded as such, religious discourse requires a closer study of the concept of intrinsic motivation from a causal perspective. Are human emotions such as satisfaction, joy, and excitement the goal or an inevitable product of interesting activity? Does the former have a certain hedonistic or egocentric quality or is it distinct from the satisfaction felt when satisfying a basic drive? As mentioned earlier, the distinction between acting in order to feel satisfaction or joy and acting because of an inherent interest in the activity that results in a form of satisfaction is not easy to maintain. How can we truly know whether we are motivated by the activity itself or the emotive effect of the activity?

Can we truly separate an inherent interest in an activity from the satisfaction we naturally

experience by engaging in it? What are the implications of these question in the field of religion

and other fields? While the scope of these questions are beyond this current work, the

distinction between eudaimonic and hedonic satisfaction and happiness may help clarify

intrinsic motivation. While I explore some of these issues in the final chapter, I look forward to

taking up these issues in future writings.

Whereas intrinsic motivation refers to causes originating from within us that energize

and direct our behavior, extrinsic motivation refers to causes external to the organism that

impel it to act. If at a base level intrinsic motivation describes doing an act because of an

interest in the activity itself, then extrinsic motivation "refers to behavior where the reason for

doing it is something other than an interest in the activity itself."[37] These other reasons could

be incentives, fears, threats of punishment, social pressures and expectations, or goals beyond

the activity. A child may act merely to get a letter grade or the approval of her teacher or

parent. In such cases, her act would be considered extrinsically motivated. It is interesting that

Deci and Ryan include within the concept of extrinsic motivation a range of causes that seem to

be located internally (that is the locus of causality is internal – or so it seems). They state,

"extrinsically motivated behaviors may range from being determined largely by controls to

being determined more by choices based on one's own values and desires. In the latter case,

they would be more self-determined."[38] It is difficult to determine what exactly is being

suggested or implied here. It begs the question whether values and desires are somehow

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[37] Edward L. Deci and Richard M. Ryan, *Intrinsic Motivation and Self-Determination in Human Behavior* (New York: Plenum, 1985), 35.
[38] Ibid.

foreign to one's nature, which doesn't seem to comport with their position on drives and needs, or whether *some* values and desires originate externally and even if they are internalized, because of their external origin they are still considered extrinsic motivators. Some ameliorate this problem by conceptualizing intrinsic and extrinsic motivation as a continuum rather than a dichotomy,[39] whereas others conceive of the relationship as two independent possibilities in which a person can be motivated intrinsically at times and extrinsically at times.[40] It seems that if the two fall along a continuum, whether a motive was originally external but now experienced and expressed as a personal desire should be treated the same way as motives that originate internally insofar the research concerning benefits and advantages of intrinsic motivation is relevant to both of these dynamics along the continuum.

Whereas intrinsic motivation perhaps represents a limited aspect of human experience, extrinsic motivation, arguably, characterizes most of human experience. Moreover, there are many intrinsically motivated acts that are not socially acceptable. The capacity of restraint, self-control, and inhibition are necessities of the world (and perhaps an argument can be made that they are, in some form, part of human nature and not just social exigencies) if we are to live meaningfully and productively in society. If we are to realize our aspirations at higher levels we must engage in activities that are not always intrinsically motivating. Students usually don't find fractions or irregular verbs inherently interesting, but can be motivated to learn them well extrinsically and ideally through some intrinsic interest aimed at higher goals. From a religious perspective as well, extrinsic motivation plays an important role in shaping the beliefs and

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[39] See Toshihiko Hayamizu, "Between Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation: Examination of Reasons for Academic Study Based on the Theory of Internalization." *Japanese Psychological Research* 39, no. 2 (1997): 98–108.
[40] Anita Woolfolk, *Educational Psychology: International Edition*, 12th ed. (Boston: Pearson, 2013), 432.

practices of a believer. A child does not intrinsically believe in Angels or an after-life. These beliefs are accepted through the process of socialization and internalization.

Since most behaviors are not intrinsically motivated, extrinsic regulations and values are adopted through the process of internalization. Deci, et al., define the process of internalization as "transforming external regulations into internal regulations and optimally into one's sense of self."[41] Internalization is the internal process at work in the external process of socialization. An individual gradually is introduced to beliefs, concepts, values, goals, behaviors external to oneself and socialization describes how the individual accommodates and acquires these aspects to function in society and in turn how these social elements exert control over the individual. According to Bloom, et al., internalization is broader than socialization since the latter "refers only to the acceptance of the contemporary value pattern of the society," and the former refers "to the process through which values, attitudes, etc., in general are acquired."[42] In other words, internalization is more about what the organism does to accommodate the environment whereas socialization is more about how the forces within the environment shape the organism. As two sides of a coin, the processes involved entail a complex symbiotic relationship between the organism and the environment; the intrapersonal and interpersonal; the individual and society. As a continuum, the literature treats internalization not as a singular phenomenon but as a complex process with various level or types ranging from low level to high levels of internalization and integration.

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[41] Edward L. Deci, Eghrari Haleh, Brian C. Patrick, and Dean R. Leone, "Facilitating Internalization: The Self-Determination Theory Perspective," *Journal of Personality* 62, no. 1 (1994), 119.

[42] David R. Krathwohl, Benjamin S. Bloom, and Bertram B. Masia, *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: The Classification of Educational Goals* (London: Longmans, 1964), 30.

Deci and Ryan identify four types comprising the internalization continuum or process whereas Bloom and his colleagues describe the process across five levels. While Bloom's levels of internalization in the affective taxonomy are better developed and explain nuances in both internal experiences of the individual as well as the interaction between the individual and the external regulations and environment, Deci and Ryan provide a psychological discourse that situates their framework in a theory of organismic needs and thus furnishes a much richer narrative and explanation. In other words, OIT's construct of internalization better explains the internal psychological process and the variant factors that influence the process.

To help explain the process of internalization, Deci and Ryan identify four types of internalization. This typology effectively constructs a framework that conceptualizes internalization developmentally. It is important to note that while OIT's internalization construct explains the process of internalization in terms of development, this construct should not be construed as a developmental model that offers a linear sequence of staged development. In other words the types of internalization are not stages of development that follow a linear, sequential path from one level of internalization to the next, but rather, the typology and framework is a way of explaining different types of internalization that have some relationship with development although not necessarily linear or sequential. A brief account of the four types is described below.

Anticipation and self control

The first type of internalization is described as "anticipation and self-control" or "external regulation." Internalization begins when a child *anticipates* a certain effect, consequence, or response from the environment (e.g. an angry parents voice) as s/he interacts

with something in the environment (e.g. as the child reaches for dad's computer), and modifies

or *controls* his/her behavior, consequently.[43] Whereas a newborn is generally extrinsically

regulated, at this phase the child internalizes external demands to the extent of merely

anticipating a consequence and responding by self-regulating. This process of anticipation and

self-control is refined throughout the first few years in which the child becomes more adept. It

should be kept in mind that internalization functions contemporaneously with purely

extrinsically motivated behavior as well as intrinsically motivated behavior. A child may

anticipate a certain consequence and control his/her behavior therefore, but that same child at

that same developmental level may also only be motivated through rewards or threat of

punishments for another behavior (e.g. promise of TV time if s/he eats vegetables). Likewise,

the child may display purely intrinsically motivated behavior such as pushing buttons on a TV

remote. Compliance to external demands should not be conflated with the process of

anticipation and self-control. In their most recent book, Deci and Ryan describe this type of

internalization as external regulation since the behavior, although willful, is only produced due

to the presence of an external contingency. It should be clear that while these external

contingencies can effectively produce the desired behavior, the behavior is not sustainable in

absence of the perceived rewards and punishments tied to the behavior.

   Introjection

   The second type of internalization termed "introjection," is when the individual

sufficiently invests him or herself in the value or behavior and personally assents to its

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[43] Edward L. Deci and Richard M. Ryan, *Intrinsic Motivation and Self-Determination in Human Behavior* (New York: Plenum, 1985), 134-5.

importance but in which there exists a separation between the value/behavior and the self

which usually produces pressure and tension.[44] The individual has established an "internal

representation of formerly external controls,"[45] and now controls oneself by one's own

pressurized demands involving the feelings of guilt, anxiety, and/or shame. External pressures

are replaced by internal pressures but now one's self-worth and self-esteem are dependent on

the outcomes. So, for example, one may accept and value the importance of praying five times

a day, and believe that s/he "should," but this person is motivated to pray because if s/he

doesn't s/he will feel guilty or shameful. Introjection is an extremely important concept for

religious development. Facilitating introjection and transitioning past it need to be seriously

studied from a religious perspective. It appears many religious adherents remain stagnant in an

introjected state as it relates to religious beliefs, values, and behaviors. In some sense this may

not be problematic given that God may not require that every act be performed out of inherent

interest (or for the love of God – which may originally be regarded as extrinsic anyways) at least

from a deontological perspective. Whether one acts because of guilt or shame, may still be

acceptable to God. Moreover, human experience is diverse; it would be unreasonable to

suggest that guilt, fear, shame, or promises of reward and joy are always negative. In fact,

reflection is often provoked by feelings of guilt and shame. Nonetheless, from a phenomenal

perspective introjection represents a diminished form of internalization that does not reflect

wholehearted embrace and uninhibited expression as the next two types.

> *Identification*

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[44] Edward L. Deci, Eghrari Haleh, Brian C. Patrick, and Dean R. Leone, "Facilitating Internalization: The Self-Determination Theory Perspective," *Journal of Personality* 62, no. 1 (1994): 120-1.
[45] Deci and Ryan, *Intrinsic Motivation and Self-Determination in Human Behavior*, 135.

Whereas introjected behavior might be conveyed by the words of a child; "good

children should put away their toys," identified behavior may be captured by the words, "I like

to put away my toys after playing – clutter makes it hard to find things." The introjected

behavior of the child is based on a conceptual understanding of the importance of a thing,

whereas the identified behavior links the conceptual understanding to personal efficacy in a

non-compulsive, non-threatening manner. The transition may be from "I have to…" to "I want

to…" When a person identifies with an external regulation or value, they see the personal

meaning it has and not just its instrumental value. Once a person finds an external regulation or

value personally meaningful, s/he feels more volitional carrying out the behavior or adopting

the value.

Integration

The difference between *identification* and *integration* is not always clear in the

literature. Some authors do not speak of *integration* and just stop at *identification*. However,

according to Deci and Ryan in their book, *Intrinsic Motivation and Self-Determination in Human*

Behavior, integration occurs when the "regulation is integrated into one's developing sense of

self."[46] We now have the making of a fully self-determined behavior. The individual sees,

experiences, and acts as if the original extrinsic value or regulation was never external. The

difference between *identification* and *integration* is the behavior in the latter process is now

integrated within a larger schema and contributes to the wholeness of the individual. Whereas,

it is quite possible that an identification, although being endorsed by the self, exists more or

less in a silo and has yet to interrelate and find its stable place among other internalized

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[46] Ibid., 138.

regulations and value or intrinsic needs. In fact, it is not infrequent that individuals

compartmentalize certain internalized values and thus quite possibly the individual inhabits

conflicting and contradicting forces that, if unreconciled, can create tensions and disorders

disrupting and fragmenting the self. A regulation or value can be said to have been fully

internalized when it is not only self-endorsed but also *reflectively* brought into congruence with

other intrinsic needs and identifications. Regulations and values that are truly integrated

represent stable and enduring aspects of one's identity. In terms of religiosity, this form of

internalization is certainly the phenomenal aim by which religious traditions can safely and

confidently be passed from one generation to the next.

These categories of internalization capture important internal experiences that are

integral to religious formation. The description of the process and model of internalization

presented within this section is simplified to help situate the four dimensions explained earlier

in this chapter. While there are few studies that use SDT and OIT to explain religious motivation

and internalization, there are none that I am aware of that deal with Muslim religiosity or

engage Islamic discourses. Deci and Ryan briefly do take up a few issues that some may

associate with Islam and Muslims (i.e. terrorism, apostasy punishments, and female genital

mutilation), but they discuss them as examples of 'autonomy-thwarting' beliefs and values.

While I can understand that the 'pervasive context' in which Islamophobia seems constant

would yield such negative considerations of Islam and Muslims, I believe there is a great need

for non-Muslims and Muslims to understand and respect complex forces that both allow

religious traditions to pursue faith development on their own respective terms (autonomy)

while being exceedingly conscious and engaged with the beliefs, practices, and values of others

(relatedness).

Chapter 3: How to Study Religious Internalization – Method

How to study religious internalization – Method of Mutual Critical Correlation

When it comes to relating religion with other human experiences or disciplines of knowledge in the modern world, the relationship is often unidirectional. In the secular, anthropocentric West, human knowledge and experience is both the repository and expository of reality, meaning, and truth. The richness of human experience and its diversity permit the development of the broad disciplines of sociology, anthropology, psychology, etc. to carefully study the intricacies and gradations of the human subject and its pursuits. Paul Tillich's heightened attentiveness to the richness of human experience prompted him to propose a method of correlation by which theology could engage the novel ideas coming forth from studies of human experience.[1] According to this method, the study of human experience through these disciplines raises questions and the role of theology is to answer them. While Tillich's method of correlation forces the relevance of theology onto new knowledge constructs anchored in human experience, it is not without criticism. John Swinton summarizes this criticism stating, "experience raises the questions and theology responds to them by changing in line with the goals of experience… Theology's role is quite compliant."[2] The assumption here is that secular knowledge (i.e. knowledge produced through human experience alone) is epistemologically superior to knowledge contained in scripture or sacred tradition. The former, alone, is endowed with generative qualities whereas the later can only react to the realities human thought creates. According to the method of correlation, for theology to have any

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[1] See Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963).
[2] John Swinton, "Disability, Ableism, and Disabilism" in *The Wiley Backwell Companion to Practical Theology*, ed. Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014), 446.

meaningful role, it must first accept this subordinate position. Moreover, theology, and religious knowledge in particular, can only react in a way where *it* must change to accommodate the secular environment. Human experience, on the other hand, does not change on account of religious knowledge, but rather only when further human efforts generate knowledge and experience capable of modifying or replacing itself. While this criticism of Tillich's method of correlation may perhaps not accurately represent his own more nuanced views, it does, nevertheless, highlight a very real problem of a unidirectional approach of relating theology to human experience, which some may say accurately represents the enterprise of the secular academy.

Mutual Critical Correlation Between Religious Knowledge and Human[istic] Knowledge

Often times, the tendency is to take a modern theory that seems persuasive and useful and 'apply' it to a traditional object. The bias towards modern theories and constructs over traditional doctrines and practices sometimes goes undetected but the epistemological and hermeneutic priority given to the former is quite noticeable when we ask critical questions around the relationship between human reason and experience, on one hand, and revelation and tradition on the other. The project of relating SDT and Islamic scripture and knowledge must carefully recognize the different possibilities of orienting the relationship so to ensure the project is not reduced to simply 'applying' the truths and lessons learned from SDT onto Muslims and Islam. Although the act of 'applying' is not as straightforward as it sometimes is made to be (more on this shortly), if we merely apply the truths and findings on a theory onto another body, there is a real risk of overlooking the assumptions of the theory that may predispose and shape the object-body in such a manner as to distort its paradigmatic form. Far

too often, new theories and ideologies, such as socialism or liberalism, are applied to Islam and

Muslims, and while some insights may emerge, the modern theories are privileged with

generative and transformative powers that are capable of explaining and relating to (whether

by affirming or denying) scripture and religious knowledge. However, in the process, scripture

and religious knowledge become nothing more than something to be explained and

transformed by these theories.

In other words, scripture and religious knowledge are putty in the hands of these

theories; lacking any generative and transformative qualities, let along challenging the 'truths'

of these theories. Likewise, one may approach SDT in a manner that recognizes the depth and

breadth of its explanatory power, integrate discourses on psychological needs, content, social

contexts, and processes, and seek to uncritically and unreflectively apply it on Islam and

Muslims. But doing so would offer only few insights and miss the greater opportunity of a

meaningful engagement that allows SDT to both inform and be challenged by Islamic

knowledge, and investigate the assumptions around the ontology and epistemology of Islamic

knowledge that both give it epistemological primacy in a relationship with human knowledge

and experience but also reveal those aspects of Islamic knowledge that are mediated and

informed by human knowledge and experience. As mentioned earlier, SDT is a modern

construct and conceptualization that has a strong secular bias and is conceived in the Western

secular discipline of psychology. In spite of this, Deci and Ryan seem to welcome not only

engagement with other disciplines but the possibility of SDT being informed and transformed

by knowledge from other disciplines. They state, "although SDT is primarily a psychological

perspective, it has always aimed at consilience and thus has been open to inputs from other

disciplines from biology to sociology."[3] The openness to knowledge from other disciplines, and

for the interest of this work, from the domain of religious knowledge and scripture is of both

methodological and epistemological import. But before proceeding to that point, it is important

to recognize the significance of such reception of inputs from other disciplines. In some

Western academic settings there is an aversion to religious knowledge. In fact, the notion of

religious motivation, that is, that religion can truly motivate and generate behavior and

thought, is met with skepticism. The logical priority of secularism means that even when

religion *appears* to inform thought and behavior, one must dig deeper for the true source since

religion is deemed cognitively meaningless.[4] If SDT welcomes input from other disciplines, and

the important assumption and act of charitable interpretation is that such disciplines are not

reduced to secular and (purely) empirically based domains of knowledge (e.g. biology and

sociology), its discursive attitude can be met mutually (to some extent as we'll see below) from

the domains of religious knowledge (e.g. theology, scriptural interpretation).

If the psychological theory of self-determination is open to input and possible revision

and its epistemological value of offering truth and certainty (or even just a greater explanatory

power) are not taken for granted as something to be *applied* to other domains of knowledge

and behavior, this then begs the question of the nature of religious knowledge and scripture

insofar as to what extent it can participate in 'consilience' with SDT. As described above, Tilich's

method of correlation brings revelation/religious knowledge and human knowledge and

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[3] Ryan and Deci, *Self-Determination Theory: Basic Psychological Needs in Motivation, Development, and Wellness*, 650.
[4] See Harold Netland, *Encountering Religious Pluralism: The Challenge to Christian Faith and Mission* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press USA, 2001), 161-162.

experience together but in a unidirectional manner in which religious truths are merely applied

to a generative and ever-changing world of human knowledge and experience. Social change

ushered in by new consciousness (as human constructions of knowledge) ask questions and

thereby place demands on religion for answers. According to this conceptualization, theology

and religion's role is assumed not to generate new social realities but merely to respond to

existing ones. Likewise, an ideological variety of secularism posits a similar docile position of

religion insofar human knowledge, including its theories and constructs are assumed to apply to

religious subjectivities but religious knowledge cannot really speak to human knowledge and

experience.

     In regards to application, it is important to note though, that whether religion is applied

to the world, or human knowledge and experience is applied to religious knowledge and

subjectivities, the act of application is not a simple act. Both religious scripture and humanistic

theories sought to be applied require interpretation. Religious scripture, whether revealed

through the divine voice or inspired in certain elect individuals, usually addresses concrete

historical situations and contains and/or urges generalizable principles. To relate scripture to a

specific case other than the one it originally addressed is to make it concrete to a different

reality. Gadamer explains this dynamic: "The work of interpretation is *to concretize* [emphasis

original] the law in each specific case, i.e. it is a work of *application*" [emphasis original].[5]

Application does not occur without interpretation and therefore any application, and this holds

true for both scripture and humanistic theory, necessarily involves both what is sought to be

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[5] Referenced in Bernard G. Weiss, "Text and Application: Hermeneutical Reflections on Islamic Legal
Interpretation" in *The Law Applied: Contextualizing the Islamic Shari'a: A Volume in Honor of Frank E. Vogel*, ed.
Frank E. Vogel et. al. (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2008), 388.

applied and the object of application. However, this process conflates application and interpretation whereby the latter often goes unrecognized. Only through a deliberate and critical inspection can one detect the workings and choices involved in interpretation. Therefore, while this current work does not seek to apply SDT onto Islam and Muslims (or for that matter Islam onto SDT), it does recognize that any effort to apply it should be thoroughly and critically appraised for the interpretative methods and choices that may be implicitly at work.

Tillich's method of correlation in which religious truths are applied to the questions arising in the world was criticized on one hand for seemingly implying a compliant and reactive nature which stripped religion from any productive and generative power and on the other hand, seemingly making religion impervious to criticism that may originate from human thought and experience. Some practical theologians offered a rejoinder to Tillich's method of correlation aptly termed 'mutual critical method of correlation' or 'mutual critical correlation.' As the expression suggests, this method "expanded the critical dimension of Tillich's model and incorporated a dialectical element which enabled the correlation between scripture, tradition, experience and reason to be *mutually* [emphasis original] correlative and critical."[6] In other words, mutual critical correlation allows humanistic knowledge and experience to correlate and challenge, that is, critically appraise religious knowledge and scripture, and likewise, religious knowledge and scripture can correlate and challenge knowledge constructed in humanistic disciplines (e.g. psychology, sociology). This mutually correlative and critical relationship presents opportunities for greater consilience without necessarily forcing conformity. Through

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[6] John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research* (London: SCM, 2006), 78-79.

this method the truth claims that SDT makes can be challenged by Islamic scripture (i.e. Quran and sunna) and Islamic/Islamicate[7] knowledge. In other words, Religious values and insights are capable of challenging the findings produced through human effort and analysis.[8] Conversely, religious knowledge can also be challenged by knowledge produced through human enquiry and endeavors (e.g. empiricism).

The mutually correlative and critical relationship between scripture and religious tradition, on one hand, and humanistic disciplines, on the other, is not without controversy. In fact, practical theologians recognize that "…the interpretive dimensions of the method of critical correlation can be theologically problematic…"[9] While scholars like Stephen Jay Gould attempt to negotiate the relationship between reason and revelation (actually, science and religion, to be precise) through the notion of non-overlapping magisteria (NOMA)[10] in which each domain represents a mutually exclusive area of inquiry and knowledge without any overlap, others recognize the impossibility of separating and hermetically sealing human reason from divine revelation, and science from religion. It is true that in some respects religious knowledge and humanistic knowledge represent independent domains in which truth claims cannot made in the other's jurisdictional space. For example, one can appreciate that religious traditions are generally uninterested with the empirical knowledge surrounding mechanical pumps (keeping in mind that it may very well relate to ancillary or contingent issues with ethical import). In such an issue any inquiry and material claim of fact and value is governed in

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[7] Islamicate is a conceptualization offered by Marshall Hodgson in his *Venture of Islam* to denote social phenomena informed by Islam without being reduced to it.
[8] John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research* (London: SCM, 2006), 82.
[9] Ibid., 83.
[10] See Stephen Jay Gould, "Nonoverlapping Magisteria," *Natural History* 106 (March 1997), 16-22.

reference to the methods and modes of knowledge advanced by human beings as a largely secular enterprise. Likewise, almost all religious traditions speak of truth and reality that is beyond human sense perception and reason such as an afterlife and human souls. However, there are numerous issues and areas where the truth claims emerging from these domains actually overlap. In fact, it may be argued that scientism and methodological naturalism have a lot to say about the notion of an afterlife and human souls. As such, any correlative and critical relationship between the two domains must be carefully considered.

From the perspective of religious and theological knowledge, the notion of a humanistic challenge to its claims of truth and reality presents a hermeneutical and epistemological quandary. This quandary is captured well by Swinton and Mowat who ask, "*How can a system of knowledge created by human beings challenge a system of knowledge that claims to be given by God?* [emphasis original]."[11] In a mutual relationship, humanistic knowledge achieves, at the least, an epistemological parity with religious knowledge, and the possibility of epistemological priority. For a theist, it is much easier to theologically accept that religious knowledge and truth claims can challenge and shape human knowledge and experience and that "theology can identify itself with psychology, but psychology does not have the power to identify itself with theology."[12] The power to identify, challenge, and change human knowledge subsists in theology by virtue of its logical priority and precedence. Deborah van Deusen Hunsinger explains theology's logical priority and its power to identify and challenge humanistic knowledge and the inability of humanistic knowledge to reciprocate. She recognizes that

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[11] John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research* (London: SCM, 2006), 83.
[12] Ibid., 85.

human reasoning and experience can offer complementary knowledge which can aid in theological acuity and reflection, but only theology retains logical priority since it speaks about the ultimate issues of the meaning of life, death, and God.[13] For van Deusen Hungsinger, the relationship between human reason/experience and religion/theology is asymmetrical by which theology/religion enjoys logical priority since it does not acquire ultimate significance from human thought and experience, but instead rests on an independent (divine) source of knowledge. As mentioned, human thought and experience can supply knowledge to help in theological clarity and reflection, but theology has no need for it to sustain its own self-understanding.[14] Theology is, thus, prior to, and ultimately independent of humanistic knowledge. On the other hand, humanistic knowledge is *relatively independent* of theology insofar human capabilities of sense perception and reasoning can describe empirical realities and processes in the world and *ultimately dependent* on theology because these descriptions are incapable of building meaning and value in and of themselves, but rather must attach on and integrate within a theological or ideological worldview to attain significance.[15] The asymmetrical relationship between theology and human reason/experience in which the former enjoys logical priority and dampens the ability of humanistic knowledge to challenge and revise theology, religious knowledge, and its truth claims is often described as a revised model of mutual critical correlation.

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[13] Deborah van Deusen Hunsinger, *Theology & Pastoral Counseling: A New Interdisciplinary Approach* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eedermans Publishing Company, 1995), 65-68.
[14] Ibid., 68-69.
[15] John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research* (London: SCM, 2006), 87.

While the revised model of mutual critical correlation maintains, both, some level and measure of correlation between theology and humanistic knowledge, and the logical priority of theology, effectively making theology impervious to humanistic challenge and revision, it seems to disguise the nature of theology. To better understand this problem it is important to, both, problematize and disambiguate theological and religious knowledge. It is difficult if not impossible to assert, even from a faith-based, confessional position, that all theological and religious knowledge are divine products; revealed and preserved by God in the very word, form, and spirit that we experience it. There are certain aspects of what constitutes 'theological and religious knowledge' that are constructed historically and through the efforts of human beings.

The Uṣūlī Framework of Textual Authenticity and Meaning

In Islam, scripture itself, that is, the Quran and the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad (his *sunna* transmitted through *ḥadīth*) are not regarded with equal epistemological and hermeneutical value. In terms of authenticity of form, the words of the Quran Muslims read today are considered the verbatim divine words revealed by God to Muhammad that he then recited to his companions. This authenticity is guaranteed through the process of corroborative reporting (*tawātur*) insofar as the Quran is concerned.[16] To be clear, Muslims consider every single letter in the Quran to be transmitted through multiple channels and reporters at every single generation between the Prophet until it was preserved in memory and texts, thus giving the text-form the highest level of epistemological certainty. In other words, there is no enduring debate among Muslims as to whether certain other words, phrases, or sentences not

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[16] For more on the principle and epistemological value of *tawātur* see Weiss' *The Search for God's Law* and Zysow's *The Economy of Certainty*.

found in the Quran should be included or that certain words, phrases, or sentences in the Quran should be excluded.[17]

Such an assertion about the authenticity of the Quran cannot be equally made about the traditions transmitted containing the Prophet's words, actions, and tacit approval. In fact, an elaborate taxonomical system of grading *ḥadīth* emerged three centuries after the Prophet's death to isolate fabricated statements attributed to him and identify traditions that were transmitted through reliable narrators.[18] The text-form of prophetic traditions is concerned moreso with the epistemological value of probability than certainty since the vast majority of reports were not transmitted through sufficiently multiple corroborative channels. While Muslims do not debate the authenticity of the Quranic text, the first question asked in regards to words attributed to the Prophet is whether they can authentically be traced back to the Prophet. In this space, human knowledge and constructs may not only challenge claims of authenticity, but that such claims are only reliably mediated through human knowledge.[19]

The focus of what constitutes theological and religious knowledge thus far has only been concerned with the text-form of scripture. Scholars of *uṣūl al-fiqh* (Islamic legal theory) capture this dimension in their epistemological construct as *thabūt* or *riwāya* (relating to textual authenticity). If the authenticity of the text-form is conclusive (*qataʿī*), then it is more likely impervious to the challenge from humanistic knowledge (depending on the degree of conclusiveness in meaning as we shall see). If, however, the authenticity of the text-form is

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[17] There is, however, the matter of the variant readings (*qirāʿāt* and *aḥruf*) and abrogation (*naskh*)of certain verses.
[18] See Jonathan Brown's *Hadith: Muhammad's Legacy in the Medieval and Modern World* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2017).
[19] Muslim theological and legal scholars did not recognize any public value to the esoteric claims of those insisting the Prophet communicated to them through private media such as dreams.

speculative (*ẓannī*), then it may be possible to challenge the statements and assertions made

within the text. As we've seen this would apply to *ḥadīth* but not the Quran. The other

dimension of scriptural analysis concerns the inherent meaning or *dalāla/dirāya* of the

scriptural text. Just as the authenticity of the text (*thabūt/riwāya*) may either be conclusive or

speculative, the inherent meaning of the words of the text (*dalāla/dirāya*) may either be

conclusive or speculative. However, it is possible for the meaning of the text, whether verses of

the Quran or *sunna* to be either conclusive or speculative. If the text can be interpreted to give

more than one meaning, then the textual meaning is speculative (*ẓannī*). However, if the text

can only bear a singular meaning, then the text is conclusive (*qataʿī*) and any attempt to

reinterpret the text or challenge the meaning of the text would tantamount to changing the

very word of God.[20]

It is important to recognize the significance of the difference in epistemological value

between the authenticity of the text (*thabūt/riwāya*), on one hand, and the meaning of the text

itself (*dalāla/dirāya*), on the other. If the authenticity of the text is doubtful, the path to admit a

challenge to the text itself from human reason and experience is more easily facilitated. As

mentioned, the epistemological value of speculative authenticity of the text applies to the

traditions of the Prophet and not to the Quran, since the Quran's authenticity is established

conclusively through diffuse reporting (*tawātur*). In regards to the epistemological value of the

meaning of the text, if the text can bear multiple, plausible interpretations, these meaning are

deemed speculative as well, and thus constitute another pathway by which human reason and

experience may potentially challenge and modify the meaning of text. It is important to note

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[20] Aron Zysow, *The Economy of Certainty* (Atlanta: Lockwood Press, 2013), 52.

here, that in this epistemic realm of hermeneutical possibility/probability, human reason and experience do not challenge the text itself, but rather one or some of the meanings given to the text. It is also important to keep in mind that such variance in epistemic value as it pertains to the meaning of the text apply both to the text of the traditions of the Prophet and the Quran.

The *uṣūlī* classification system described above demonstrates that religious knowledge and scripture, as a single epistemological category, does not entail the epistemic value of certainty and takes into account the possibility that certain religious knowledge and certain scriptures may impart lower epistemic values and thus may be more susceptible to critical engagement and challenge from humanistic knowledge and experience. In regards to mutual critical correlation, this point is significant insofar as the mutuality of critical engagement and challenge is partly conditional upon the epistemic value of the scriptural text and religious knowledge. While scripture enjoys logical priority as an ontological category, in terms of epistemology, it does not always impart certain knowledge that is impervious to other inputs or mediation. In fact, when, for example, multiple interpretations of scripture exist (whether it be Quran or the *sunna* of the Prophet), it is important to investigate whether and to what extent such interpretations are actually human constructs and contingent on human knowledge and experience and as such can be thus challenged by countervailing human knowledge and experience. For some, this may seem be a strange statement since there is no such thing as 'pure' theology or 'pure' interpretation of scripture for it is impossible to "step outside of ourselves and engage in some transcendental act of knowing which would lift us out of the creaturely conditions of knowing."[21] Others, such as Van Deusen Hunsinger, might also find it

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[21] John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research* (London: SCM, 2006), 90.

strange since in their view theology and scripture seem to be epistemologically undifferentiated and instead represent a monolithic epistemological category whereby theology and scripture are seemingly more 'pure' than some are led to believe. The *uṣūlī* classification system certainly supports the notion that not all scriptural and religious knowledge is the same; but this does not mean that all such knowledge is socially constructed nor does it mean that all such knowledge is divinely 'pure.' This classification system only demonstrates that not all scripture and religious knowledge therein is conclusively, in authenticity and meaning, the absolute word of God. The relationship between scripture and religious knowledge, on one hand, and human reason and experience, on the other, is premised on this classification and the concept of differentiated scripture and religious knowledge.

Whether humanistic knowledge and experience can challenge scripture and religious knowledge partly depends on the particular epistemic value of said scripture and religious knowledge. The *uṣūlī* classification system problematizes the notion questioning how a system of knowledge created by human beings can challenge a system of knowledge that claims to be given by God. The *uṣūlī* classification system recognizes the claim that particular knowledge is actually given by God demands critical investigation. Upon investigation, it is clear that while some knowledge claimed to be from God enjoys epistemic certainty, some other claims fall along a spectrum from high probability to spurious attribution or regard. This differentiation of scripture and religious knowledge is important in understanding the form and nature of mutual critical correlation. While some practical theologians such as Van Deusen Hunsinger do not differentiate scripture and religious knowledge and problematically assume its monolithic and apodictic nature, others such as Barth insist that there is no such thing as 'pure' theology or

religious knowledge because there is no clear way of distilling 'pure theological truth' from human accretion.[22] The *uṣūlī* classification system problematizes both of these attitudes, recognizing the epistemological differentiation of scripture and religious knowledge, and providing, at least, a logical structure that implies a capability to identify the epistemic value of a particular scriptural text or religious knowledge. The *uṣūlī* classification system described above, however, does not explain the functional relationship between scripture and religious knowledge, on one hand, and human reason and experience, on the other. Below, we will look at two vying constructs, both built on the *uṣūlī* classification system, that negotiate the relationship between knowledge claimed to be from God and humanistic knowledge and experience.

To put this discourse back into perspective, the greater concern of this chapter is the method by which religious internalization is best studied. In particular, how SDT and OIT can relate to Islamic discourses and truth claims. Are the truth claims made by SDT, for example, about human nature, psychological needs, and the nature and process of internalization, to be taken true and authoritative and, consequently, religious knowledge should conform to these truth claims? Does Islam make claims about human nature, human needs, and the nature and process of internalization, and if it does, are these truth claims conflicting with the ones made by SDT? And if there is conflict between these truth claims, how is this relationship sorted out. The sections above described and employed the method of mutual critical correlation and the *uṣūlī* classification system to help give some structure to the relationship between SDT (as a theory based on humanistic knowledge and experience) and Islam (as a faith tradition based on

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[22] Ibid.

the revelation of the Quran and the *sunna* of the Prophet) and clarify the nature of scriptural and religious knowledge. The sections below describe two approaches to relate and reconcile reason and revelation, that is, humanistic knowledge and religious/theological knowledge. In other words, these two approaches, although competing in some ways, represent two constructs to help explain how mutual critical correlation may work.

Negotiating a Relationship between Revelational Knowledge and Humanistic Knowledge through the "Universal Law"

In this section we will briefly discuss the "universal law" and how it is employed to reconcile any contradiction between reason and revelation. To understand the place of the "universal law" it is important to conceptualize the relationship between reason and revelation, that is, between humanistic knowledge and religious knowledge in terms of general logical possibilities. Logically speaking, there are five possible relationships between reason and revelation. First, reason and revelation may both be silent or equivocal on a matter. That is, neither of the two make absolute claims about an issue. Neither reason nor revelation claims definitively, for example, about the existence of "Zurg" species of extraterrestrial life (although many people may believe to varying degrees of certitude in extraterrestrial life). Second, humanistic knowledge is definitive and revelational knowledge is either silent or equivocal. In this case, human reason leads one to make claims about something being absolutely true and revelation is open to that or an alternative position. For instance, science (as a way of empirically studying the natural world through human reason) has shown that the earth revolves around the sun, and revelation is not necessarily opposed to this position. In other words, scripture may bear this interpretation or contradictory alternatives. Third, humanistic knowledge is equivocal and revelation is definitive. This is the inverse of the second

relationship. Muslims believe, as absolute truth, in the existence of heaven and hell whereas human reason unaided by revelation does not stake a claim on such issues. These three relationships represent possible compatibility between reason and revelation. Compatibility, however, is not the same as concord. Whereas the former describes a relationship in which reason and revelation do not *necessarily* conflict, the latter describes a fourth relationship in which both reason and revelation make ostensibly definitive claims, but the claims are qualitatively the same. So for example, both revelation and humanistic knowledge hold that the universe is governed by laws and that cognitive human faculties are reliable means to understand the world. As such, there is complete concord between the two. The fifth relationship is similar to the fourth insofar that both reason and revelation make ostensibly definitive claims but the claims they make are contrary so that both cannot be true. This relationship represents the theoretical possibility of conflict. Although logically or theoretically possible, theists, in general, would dismiss this last category as non-actual (i.e., it does not exist in the real world as an actuality) by problematizing the epistemic and hermeneutic values of either humanistic knowledge or religious knowledge, or both.

The "universal law" enters this debate, centering on the fifth logical possibility and attempting to move the relationship between reason and revelation into one of compatibility, concord, or priority of one over the other. The Muslim theologian, Fakhr al-dīn al-Rāzī famously summarized and canonized the rule as follows:

> "If scriptural and rational indications, or revelation and reason, or the obvious outward meaning of the revelated texts and the definitive conclusions of rational thought – or other such ways of phrasing it – are in conflict, then either: (1) they must both be accepted, which is impossible as this would violate the Law of Non-Contradiction [claiming both *p* and *-p*]; (2) they must both be rejected, which is also impossible as this would violate the Law of the Excluded Middle [claiming

neither *p* nor -*p*]; (3) precedence must be given to revelation, which is impossible since revelation is *grounded in* reason, such that if we were to give priority to the former over the latter [that is, to revelation over reason], this would amount to a rejection of *both* reason *and* [by extension] that which is grounded by reason [i.e., revelation]. One must, therefore, (4) give precedence to reason over revelation, then either make figurative interpretation of scripture (*taʾwīl*) or [to accord with reason], or negate the apparent meaning of scripture but refrain from assigning to it a definitive, particular metaphorical meaning (*tafwīḍ*)."[23]

It seems the universal law holds that when reason and revelation conflict, reason is given precedence and revelation is hermeneutically molded to conform to the knowledge produced by reason. Reason is epistemically superior to revelation, according to the universal law, due to the role it plays in validating revelation as a category to begin with. The belief in God, the prophethood of Muhammad, and the divine nature of the Quran are not based on the contents of the Quran (which would entail circularity), but rather, are beliefs arrived at through the use of human reason. It is through human thought processes that one comes to believe in God, the prophethood of Muhammad, and the divine nature of the Quran. Thus, the argument goes, if reason is subordinate and subject to challenge from revelation, then revelation will defeat the very thing that gives it legitimacy, thereby undercutting its own. The universal rule predisposes attention to the question of hermeneutical malleability of revelation and al-Ghazālī puts forth another rule, "the rule of interpretation," to complement the universal rule, and determine when and under what conditions revelation can be interpreted in ways that avoid conflict with reason.

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[23] Carl S. El-Tobgui, ""Reason, Revelation & the Reconstitution of Rationality: Taqī al-Dīn Ibn Taymiyya's (d. 728/1328) Darʾ Taʿāruḍ al-ʿAql wa-l-Naql." PhD diss., (McGill University, 2013), 132.

Al-Ghazālī, across several of his books, explains the "rule of interpretation" within a hermeneutic system consisting of five levels of existence and each corresponding to an appropriate mode of interpretation. This system, he explains, helps in understanding when a verse should be interpreted according to its literal, apparent meaning and when it is permissible to abandon the literal, apparent meaning.[24] The five levels of existence in order of interpretive priority are: 1) the ontological level (*al-wujūd al-dhātī*), 2) the sensory level (*al-wujūd al-ḥissī*), 3) the conceptual level (*al-wujūd al-khayālī*), 4) the noetic level (*al-wujūd al-ʿaqlī*), and 5) the metaphorical level (*al-wujūd al-shibhī*).[25] The ontological level is the most fundamental level at which interpretation proceeds.[26] At this level things exist in a concrete fashion in the external world which we apprehend through our senses and mind. So for example, a statement to the effect that 'the moon orbits the earth' could be sustained on the ontological level and interpreted in a very literal sense in that one means and understands that the moon physically moves. As part of a hierarchical hermeneutic system, the *sensory* level follows the ontological level. At the sensory level things are understood through human perception but have no existence in the real world. To illustrate the interpretive movement from the ontological to the sensory, we can analyze the verse in the Quran which states, "and you might have seen the sun, when it rose, declining to the right from their Cave, and when it set, turning away from them to the left" (18:17). Since interpretation should first begin at the ontological level, we first attempt to interpret this verse on the ontological level in its literal,

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[24] Frank Griffel, *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 111.
[25] Ibid., 112.
[26] Sherman Jackson, *On the Boundaries of Theological Tolerance in Islam: Abū Hāmid al-Ghazālī's Fayṣal al-Tafriqa*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 50.

apparent meaning (*ẓāhir*). This would mean that the sun in actual reality rises and sets and moves from right to left. However, we know empirically and logically that the sun does not move in these ways. Because of this logical impossibility we must descend to the subsequent sensory level to determine if another interpretation at this level can eliminate the conflict with what is considered to be definitive human knowledge (i.e. our empirical knowledge that the sun is stationary). Since the reference point at the sensory level is human sensory perception and since humans perceive the sun to rise and set we can say that the verse is true on a sensory level but false on an ontological level. In other words, since interpreting the verse on the ontological level would result in a logical impossibility we shift to the next level and determine whether it is meaningful at this level and consistent with our definitive knowledge of the world. At the sensory level the verse is meaningful and consistent with our definitive knowledge of the world since the perspective is based on human sensory perception (and not an external objective reality). There is no compulsion to interpret it in a strict literal sense and insist that the reality must be false. Likewise, one need not deem the verse false altogether. The contradiction is averted by moving to the sensory level of interpretation.

For our purposes here it is sufficient to briefly describe just a few levels of interpretation and the overarching principle. The last of the five levels is metaphorical. Only if interpretation cannot be sustained at the four previous levels or, in other words, the interpreted meaning is logically impossible due to the presence of some definite proof(s), should a statement be interpreted metaphorically. The range of interpretive license afforded by this hermeneutic system provides religion with an organic mechanism to relate revelation to the world. In fact, the interpretation of scripture in this hermeneutic system is mediated by non-textual indicators

in the form of definitive proofs that cause logical (and empirical) impossibilities. In this respect

Islam has its own system to seriously account for the natural world and human cognitive

faculties. It does not seek to operate in a vacuum or be oblivious to everything but itself.

The movement from one level to another is possible only if a logical impossibility ensues

by interpreting the statement on the previous level. Since no such impossibility ensued for the

statement concerning the moon orbiting the earth, no warrant existed to move down the

interpretive ladder. Muslim theologians required definitive proof of logical impossibility in

order to move to the next level of interpretation. This is what Al-Ghazālī calls "the rule of

interpretation" (*qānūn al-taʾwīl*). He states,

> "Hear now the rule of interpretation: You learned that with regard to
> interpretation (*taʾwīl*) the different groups [of Islam] agree upon these five levels
> of being (…). They also agree that allowing [a reading that deviates from the
> literal meaning] depends on the production of a demonstration (*burhān*) that the
> literal meaning (*al-ẓahīr*) is impossible."[27]

The rule of interpretation requires a definitive proof (*burhān*) that the level at which

interpretation is taking place is logically impossible, and therefore warranting descent to the

subsequent level of interpretation. The question at hand then is, whether a particular proof is

compelling enough as a *definitive proof* to effect interpretative movement from one level to

another. In fact, "al-Ghazālī's insists that the real contention between the theological scholars is

not over any difference in their respective levels of commitment to scripture, but rather over

what each recognizes and accepts as a justification for moving from one level of interpretation

to the next."[28] This seems to be an admission by al-Ghazālī and proponents of his

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[27] Cited in Frank Griffel, *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 111-112.
[28] Sherman Jackson, *On the Boundaries of Theological Tolerance in Islam: Abū Hāmid al-Ghazālī's Fayṣal al-Tafriqa*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 52.

hermeneutical system that scholars may differ as to what constitutes a definitive proof, and consequently, differ in their interpretation of revelation.

For al-Ghazālī and other speculative theologians (*mutakallimīn*) the criteria for definitive proof was inspired and bound by Aristotelian-Neoplatonic speculative rationalism (*al-naẓar al-ʿaqlī*). Al-Ghazālī encourages his readers to consult his work, *Touchstone of Reasoning in Logic* (*Miḥakk al-naẓar*), a work that introduces Aristotelian logic, to understand the qualities of a definitive proof. In another work, *The Correct Balance* (*al-Qisṭās al-mustaqīm*), he covers five different types of syllogisms that qualify as definitive proofs sufficient to warrant reinterpretation of revelation in order to bring it into harmony with sound reason.[29] This parochial conceptualization of "reason," that is, reason defined only in the form of Aristotelian syllogistic reasoning was met with severe criticism from other Muslim scholars, such as Ibn Taymiyya, who deemed the universal law, the law of interpretation, and even the standard debate of reason versus revelation problematic. This critique serves as a useful rejoinder that can help inform our current project of relating a theory of internalization and the truth claims SDT makes with proximate, overlapping, or competing truth claims made by Islamic scripture and knowledge.

Reconceptualizing the Relationship Between Revelational Knowledge and Humanistic Knowledge Through Ibn Taymiyya's Rejoinder of the "Universal Law"

Ibn Taymiyya begins his critique of the universal law by challenging its premise that because reason grounds revelation, if precedence is given to revelation it would undercut

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[29] Frank Griffel, *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 116.

revelation itself. To be sure Ibn Taymiyya agrees that fundamental Islamic beliefs such as the

existence of God, the reality of prophethood, and the possibility of miracles are all grounded in

reason and cannot be substantiated solely through recourse to revelation.[30] However, the sort

of reason undergirding revelation is of a particular type. In other words, Ibn Taymiyya seeks to

deconstruct "reason" as some singular category. Reason is a general category that subsumes

different types and forms of thought. In fact, reason often includes rational propositions that

are contradictory, both valid and invalid, and some more valid and less valid. The type of reason

that grounds revelation is valid and this leads Ibn Taymiyya to propose his own rule in

opposition to the universal law:

> "If reason and revelation contradict, then revelation must be given priority over
> reason, since reason has adjudged revelation veracious in everything it contains,
> whereas revelation has *not* judged reason to be correct in all the various
> conclusions to which it might come, nor is our knowledge of the authenticity of
> revelation dependent upon (*mawqūf ʿalā*) all of the several conclusions to which
> reason may have come."[31]

Unlike the universal law that prioritizes reason over revelation since the validity of revelation is

purportedly dependent upon reason, Ibn Taymiyya's law privileging revelation does so by

problematizing and complexifying reason. Reason is not a singular category and the use of

reason does not always or necessarily lead to valid conclusions. In fact, reason is diversified and

can produce equally contradictory conclusions. Therefore, if reason is said to conflict with

revelation, then precedence should be given to revelation since revelation has been adjudged

for its veracity by the sort of reason that is valid and leads to valid conclusions, and thus the

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[30] Carl S. El-Tobgui, ""Reason, Revelation & the Reconstitution of Rationality: Taqī al-Dīn Ibn Taymiyya's (d.
728/1328) Darʾ Taʿāruḍ al-ʿAql wa-l-Naql." PhD diss., (McGill University, 2013), 160.
[31] Ibid., 164.

type of reason that conflicts with revelation is likely to comprise human thought that is in some

way erroneous.

This does not mean, however, that all of revelation is always prioritized over all of

reason. Actually, similar to al-Ghazālī's construct of reason and revelation, and in accordance

with the *uṣūlī* framework described above, Ibn Taymiyya does not leave revelation

undifferentiated while differentiating reason. For him as well, the epistemological value of each

source is what matters. Revelation must be examined to determine whether it is conclusive

(*qaṭʿī*) or speculative (*ẓannī*).[32] He argues that both reason and revelation can be conceptualized

as a spectrum ranging from epistemic values of certainty to fallaciousness, and thus precedence

is to be given to what is more probative. Effectively, Ibn Taymiyya reconceptualizes the reason

versus revelation problem, which suffers from substantive undifferentiation, into the problem

of certainty versus conjecture (or more pervasively more certain versus less certain knowledge),

and determining what is scripturally validated revelation and reason from scripturally

invalidated revelation and reason. While it may seem odd to think of scripturally validated

revelation and scripturally invalidated revelation (given the apparent circularity involved), since

the scripture of the Quran and the sound, authentic traditions of the Prophet have been

assessed for their veracity according to a certain type of reason, scripturally validated

revelation refers to these authentic texts of revelation "properly comprehended."[33] Conversely,

the category of scripturally invalid revelation is possible insofar as revelation, while it may

purportedly serve as evidence, may, nonetheless, be misinterpreted or comprehended

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[32] Ibid., 171-172.
[33] Ibid., 183.

improperly. Revelation is thus differentiated and mediated hermeneutically. When determining

the nature of revelation, Ibn Taymiyya focuses on the *meaning* of revelation and recognizes the

possibility of less tenable meanings that may be subordinate to epistemologically stronger

humanistic knowledge.[34]

Ibn Taymiyya's revised universal law hinges on 1) the nature of the meaning of

revelation, and 2) the nature of apodictic knowledge. Before a conflict is assumed between

reason and revelation, one must first ascertain what exactly revelation is saying. Ibn Taymiyya's

hermeneutical approach to revelation rests on ascertaining the context (*siyāq, qarāīn*) and

convention (ʿ*urf*) as to the meaning and usage of language, and deferring to the early

generation (*salaf*) as hermeneutical arbiters.[35] Unlike al-Ghazālī and his rule of interpretation

that proceeds with the apparent meaning (*ẓāhir*) and moves to other metaphorical meanings

through demonstration of a definitive proof (*burḥān*), Ibn Taymiyya holds that meanings are

"determined by context, as judged in light of the known, communally shared conventions of the

language in question."[36] The notion of literal and metaphorical meanings is artificial and the

logic of shifting from a literal meaning to a metaphorical meaning due to reason is equally

spurious because language and meaning do not operate this way in the real world. Rather, in

every instance, one needs to consider the context to determine the intended meaning of any

given expression. So for example, the word "hand" doesn't really have a literal meaning as that

appendage with five protruding bones covered with flesh or a metaphorical meaning of

"support" (as in the expression, "lend me a hand") or "collusion" (as in the expression "he had a

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[34] Ibid., 183-184.
[35] Ibid., 200.
[36] Ibid., 211.

hand in this," but rather any given usage of the word "hand" is mediated and determined by its context. If a mother instructs her son before dinner to wash his hands, we know what is meant here is the physical appendage. If a man lifting a heavy box asks his friend to give him a hand, we know that the man is requesting support. Likewise, Ibn Taymiyya believes that the words of revelation (Quran and *sunna* of the Prophet) are to be interpreted according to their context and within the boundaries of shared linguistic convention (*ʿurf*) of those that heard and experienced the words of revelation when they were revealed.

In other words, Ibn Taymiyya's hermeneutical system challenges the notion of disembodied default meanings (as a literal meaning would represent), and recognizes the possibility that a word can carry multiple, valid meanings depending on whether convention allows such usage and context gives rise to it. Ibn Taymiyya is often accused of literalism, however, literalism would entail that only perceived dominant meaning to apply irrespective of context or intertextuality.[37] In regards to intertextuality, Ibn Taymiyya does not advocate a siloistic interpretive approach to revelation, rather, "all the texts of revelation, taken collectively and considered in light of one another, are always fully autonomous and self-sufficient in conveying – explicitly – the meanings intended to be taken from them."[38] One cannot merely assert a meaning of a given text of scripture without first relating it to other pertinent parts of scripture and determining the meaning based on interrelating of the texts. Ibn Taymiyya's contextual and intertextual approach ensures the process of meaning-making is first and foremost committed to the text of revelation. There is no need to deflect a term or

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[37] Ibid., 216.
[38] Ibid., 218.

expression from a disembodied, apparent meaning to a metaphorical meaning due to the urging of reason because the matrix of meanings of a given term or expression is already available, and reason in already infused in the process of meaning making in the form of examining the context and the relationships with other aspects of the text.

In terms of apodictic knowledge Ibn Taymiyya's epistemological system (which may be viewed as a complement to his hermeneutical system described above) includes three sources of knowledge. The first source of humanistic knowledge is sense perception (*ḥiss*), which has an outer component involving the use of the five human senses interacting with the outside world and an inner component of sensation felt within the human body without the use of the five human senses (such as the feeling of hunger and satiety or emotional moods). The second source of knowledge is reason (*ʿaql*) which also has two components. The first is often referred to as axiomatic or *a priori* knowledge (*badīhiyyāt ḍarūrriya*) that does not necessarily depend on sense perception but occurs within the mind as necessarily true (examples include the Law of Non-Contradiction, the Law of the Excluded Middle, the Law of Identity). The second type of reasoning is a process of rational reflection and inferences (*al-iʿtibār bi-l-naẓar wa-l-qiyās*). Finally, the third (*khabar*) source of knowledge are reports which are based in sense experience, but were not experienced directly. Most of what human beings know actually is based on reports we hear, which also includes the texts of revelation.[39] In order to understand what constitutes apodictic or definitive knowledge, Ibn Taymiyya's epistemological system must be coupled with his understanding of ontology. While epistemology deals with how humans come to know, ontology deals with what exists outside for humans to know, or in other

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[39] Ibid., 245.

words, objects, entities, and phenomena that exist extra-mentally. To begin with he

distinguishes between things that exists in the mind (*maʿqūl*) and things that exist in external

reality, that is, the sentient world (*maḥsūs*).[40] Although the sentient world enjoys a true reality,

he further divides this category into those things that are perceptible to us *now* (*ʿālam al-*

shahāda) and that which exists in reality but is not perceptible to us (*ʿālam al-ghayb*). These

two categories are not fixed, however, in fact, especially as it relates to the *ghayb*, while we

may not perceive something at this moment does not entail that it may never be perceived by

the five senses. The existence of protons and neutrons or bacteria might have belong to the

realm of *ghayb* for pre-modern humans, but this reality that was previously not perceptible

became so for modern humans, especially those who actually work with them in a direct

manner. Nonetheless, there exists a realm whose authenticity is secured through authentic

reports of revelation that is absolutely beyond human sense perception (examples include the

existence of angels and even the human soul).

For our purposes of the method of relating scripture to humanistic knowledge, it is

important to consider the role and function of reason. Ibn Taymiyya defines reason as

> 'an instinct in the mind /heart' (*gharīza fī al-qalb*) essentially endowed with the
> capacity to perform three vital functions: (1) the universalization of particulars,
> enabled by the ability of reason to recognize relevant similarities between
> particular existents and to abstract these into universal concepts, (2) issuing
> judgments in the form of predicative statements (*taṣdīqāt/aḥkām*) relative to
> existent particulars, and (3) drawing inferences of various sorts, by means of
> which new knowledge is derived (essentially, by transferring a given 'judgment,'
> or *ḥukm*, to a new subject or entity).[41]

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[40] Ibid., 246.
[41] Ibid., 271.

Looking closely at this definition and contrasting it with knowledge attained through sense perception (ḥiss), it is clear that the judgments of reason can only be theoretical and relational but not be present in concrete reality as such. On the contrary, the existence of something is actually based on sense perception and not through reason. Once an external reality is perceived through the senses, it only establishes the existence of that particular reality and not any conceptual knowledge. Conceptual knowledge occurs through a process of relating this reality perceived through the senses with other aspects or judgments, in either case this knowledge exists only in the mind and not in actual reality. This epistemic system relativizes reason and therefore serves to problematize it in relation to revelation. Through this maneuver, Ibn Taymiyya is able to argue that conceptual and theoretical knowledge exists only in the mind and while it may warrant judgments, it simply does not enjoy the strength that allows it to be measure by which revelation is to be judged.

If mutual critical correlation is to truly function effectively, the universal law that makes human reasoning the occasioning force of re-interpreting revelation had to be subverted. Whereas the universal law and Ibn Taymiyya's criticism demands a high standard of definitive knowledge, most humanistic knowledge actually operates in the realm of subjective, relative truths which certainly offer utility and meaning in life such as SDT and OIT. Ibn Taymiyya's rejoinder seems to place humanistic knowledge in a place where it can be critically appraised as a construction that does not enjoy definitive epistemic support. However, this project is not just about conflict and concord between revelation and reason (or more precisely, between SDT and the truth claims that Islam makes), but about mutual hermeneutical and epistemic engagement that variably conditions, qualifies, pressures, and shapes meaning, that is both the

meaning of what SDT is as a concept that lies in the minds of humans who seek to construct or

understand it, but also how it is understood in its particularized, concretized form. So for

example, even if we agree that autonomy is a fundamental psychological need, as we will see in

the following chapter, this does not necessarily mean that the variant meanings attributed to it

or its manifestations in particular instances all equally represent definitive knowledge as to the

truth of autonomy as a basic human need.

Chapter 4: Relating Self-Determination Theory and Islamic Discourse

In chapter two we discussed in some detail the theory of self-determination. In that chapter we examined the content of SDT, and more specifically, OIT, by exploring the main discourses of psychological needs, the process and model of internalization, content, and context. In chapter three we discussed the method of relating SDT to Islam via mutual critical correlation, the *uṣūlī* classification system, and the competing hermeneutical theories of al-Ghazali and Ibn Taymiyya. At this juncture, we know what SDT is and how SDT may relate to Islam, but we have not really addressed what Islam is. The question of what is Islam is not only important because it supplies the content to be internalized and thus urges us to consider the internalizability of such content, but also allows us to examine whether what is deemed as Islam, Islamic, or Islamicate posits a human nature that is at variance with SDT, and or whether the universe of Islam critically challenges (or agrees with) the conceptualization of content and social contexts posited by SDT. Not to mention, a discourse of what is Islam, may, more generally, allow us to recognize its own self-imposed boundaries and limits of theological and juridical normativity, and thus afford accommodating space to the truth claims posited by SDT.

What is Islam?

Before relating SDT to Islam, we must first have some working conceptualization of what Islam is. I do not seek to approach this issue by way of identifying all of the content that I believe comprises the wholeness and fullness of what Islam is as that is not possible nor very helpful in this current project as to the ways in which SDT can relate to Islam and help inform a robust conceptualization of religious internalization of Islamic content. Fortunately for the purpose of this work, Shahab Ahmed recently wrote a very lengthy text with the exact title of

What is Islam? The Importance of Being Islamic. His conceptualization of Islam offers broad and

inclusive terms by which one can understand the complex diversity that Islam represents. It is

worth noting, however, that he admits his conceptualization is premised on Islam as a "human

and historical phenomenon" and not a theological or juridical way of belief and living tied to

"existential salvation."[1] I am not convinced that such a distinction is entirely separable or

sustainable especially since, he attempts to show "how Islam *should* [emphasis added] be

conceptualized as a means to a more meaningful understanding both of Islam in the human

experience, and thus of the human experience at large."[2] It is one thing to argue how Islam is

expressed and understood in the human and historical lives of people across time and space,

but it is another to assert a normative concept based on these inputs. Ahmed, furthermore,

takes it a step further and attempts to construct a "coherent conceptualization" of Islam that

accounts for the vast diversity of what Islam is in human and historical terms. While such an

agenda is laudable in its own right, any *normative* understanding of Islam (as Ahmed's

conceptualization seems unable to escape) cannot simply insulate itself from what Islam is as

theology and praxis that is first and foremost connected to existential salvation, and reduce

Islam to, albeit, rich, complex, diverse, but nonetheless, as something that should be

understood in human and historical terms.

Even a project that seeks to explain how Islam should be conceptualized coherently as a

human and historical phenomena must admit the centrality of the Quranic message of the

beliefs and practices that lead to salvation in the next life. The human and historical

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[1] Shahab Ahmed, *What Is Islam? The Importance of Being Islamic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 5.
[2] Ibid., 5-6.

phenomena are informed to some extent or another, and without ever entirely being divorced

from matters related to the Other World. The six questions Ahmed explores in part one of his

book such as what is Islamic about Islamic philosophy, sufism, Ibn Arabi's *waḥdat al-wujūd*

(unity of existence), Hafiz's Divan (complete poems), Islamic art, and even Muslims imbibing

Quranically-prohibited wine are all in some ways related to the numinous realm of God's

nature, the unseen world, the afterlife, and other Quranic themes. To explore these

phenomena as disembodied human and historical experiences is one thing, but to suggest this

is how such phenomena *should* be perceived is to grossly undervalue that which makes them

Islamic, if that is to be the case, is in some significant respect related to numinous, theological,

and salvific concerns.

In spite of Ahmed's confined phenomenological boundary of how Islam should be

conceptualized as human and historical phenomena, his conceptualization can be appropriated

without necessarily sacrificing the theological and salvific underpinnings of Islam. Before (re)-

conceptualizing Islam, Ahmed critiques 18 conceptualizations of Islam from the least

persuasive, in his view, being Islam as Islamic law to the most sustainable; Islam as process.

While his analysis and critique are quite insightful, it is his own reconceptualization that echoes

an enticing inclusivism and strength capable of making sense of perhaps the widest imaginable

range of the diversity of what Islam means and has meant to a diverse range of persons

spanning more than 1400 years. Ahmed explains, "we conceptualize Islam, in the first instance,

as *hermeneutical engagement* – that is, as engagement by an actor or agent with a source or

object of (potential) meaning in a way that ultimately *produces meaning for the actor* by way of

the source."[3] The first noun, 'engagement,' refers to a range of dispositions that involve being connected, whether it be as an action, an activity, or a more lengthy and enduring condition whereby the self and a people engage the object with some level of attachment and commitment. The adjective, 'hermeneutical,' characterizes the nature of engagement as being centered on the "process of *truth-knowing* and *meaning-making*."[4] Truth and meaning can never truly be separated. The self engages in the interpretive process that makes meaning of both the sources and the self. The self is made meaningful in relation to the source just as the source is made meaningful in relation to the self. In other words, "*Muslims make Islam just as Islam makes Muslims* in all the evident complexity and contradiction of this process and engagement."[5] As such Islam is recognized not in a constructivist sense of being made by the interpreter, although the interpreter does make meaning from the source in relational ways, but that Islam in terms of its source also has a truth-form which creates meaning for the human self and society. This begs the question: what source is being hermeneutically engaged to produce meaning?

There can be no Islam without first the notion of revelation to Muhammad. Hermeneutical engagement with revelation to Muhammad is the source of how we know what Islam is. But for Ahmed, revelation to Muhammad is not just the text of the Quran and the traditions of the Prophet, but rather comprises Text, Pre-Text, and Con-Text. In other words, "*something is Islamic to the extent that it is made meaningful in terms of hermeneutical*

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[3] Ibid., 345.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Ibid., 329.

engagement with Revelation to Muhammad as one or more of Pre-Text, Text, and Con-Text."[6]

The text of the Quran and the traditions (*āḥadīth*) of the Prophet form the center of what is

Islam. After all, if it wasn't for the Quran and the person of Muhammad, there would be no

historically recognizable phenomenon of Islam.

Part of appropriating Ahmed's conceptualization is to increase the hermeneutical value

of the Text (in terms of truth and meaning) beyond what Ahmed affords and using it as an

essential and dominant anchor for determining what Islam is. Muslims may claim a

phenomenon or object to be Islamic but the surest marker of that identity is its connection with

the text of the Quran and prophetic traditions. Especially when a conceptualization is removed

from the truth-premise of 'human and historical' and placed within a matrix that does not

excise theology or existential salvation, by virtue that the Text itself constantly urges the reader

to reflect on who God is (theology), and whether our affairs are pleasing to Him (existential

salvation), the hermeneutic engagement, thus prioritize the Text of the Quran and the tradition

of the Prophet as sitting on top of the ontological and hermeneutic hierarchy.[7] Only by

constricting Islam to the 'human and historical' can one lose sight of the sheer weight the Text

enjoys in defining and determining what Islam is. While it is true Ahmed recognizes that even

"the human and historical phenomenon of Islam *proceeds* [emphasis added] from assent to the

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[6] Ibid., 405.

[7] See for example the final verses of *sūra al-muʾminūn* (The Believers) 23:115-118, which state, "Did you suppose, then, that We created you frivolously, and that you would not be returned unto Us? So, exalted is God, the True Sovereign; there is no god but He, Lord of the noble Throne. Whosoever calls upon another god along with God, for which he has no proof, his reckoning is with God. Truly the disbelievers will not prosper. Say, 'My Lord! Forgive and show mercy, for Thou art the best of those who are merciful.'" These verses, and the many of their like, clearly weave and inextricably tie together our human and historical existence to His nature and what lies beyond our mundane existence.

idea of an act of disclosure or communication or revelation,"[8] he seems to undervalue and undercut its significance, meaning, and import by giving it little attention in his reconceptualization of Islam, and instead approaches the question of what is Islam via exegesis of the categories of Pre-Text and Con-Text.

The process of appropriating Ahmed's conceptualization involves a rejoinder to his pre-commitment on constricting Islam to the 'human and historical,' and relatedly, to his devaluation of the Text in determining Islam, but at the same time realizing the value of his constructs, Pre-Text and Con-Text, not just within the human and historical phenomenon of Islam but also as Islam is determined and understood theologically and in other-worldly terms. As mentioned, Islam can be clearly identified by the Text. We say the belief in final judgment, in an after-life of heaven and hell, in God's foreknowledge and determination of events prior to materialization are all Islamic because such contents and meanings are unassailably contained within the Text of revelation, that is to say, the text of the Quran and the sunnah of the Prophet. While differences may exist as to what each of these means and their significance, not all interpretations are equal in truth and meaning. Some interpretations of these beliefs may very well be challenged as being un-Islamic, such as the belief held by Muslim philosophers that God's foreknowledge does not extend to particulars but only general matters. Nonetheless, the Text grants, at the very least, a prima facie judgment to the content and meaning contained therein as Islamic. Likewise, Pre-Text and Con-Text play a major role in shaping what Islam is.

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[8] Shahab Ahmed, *What Is Islam? The Importance of Being Islamic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 346.

Pre-Text is that which comes before the text of revelation and is used to engage it. Ahmed explains, "The Pre-Text of Revelation is Pre-Text both in the sense *that it is ontologically and alethically prior to the Text* and *is that upon which the Truth of the Text is contingent*."[9] In the enterprise of meaning-making and truth-knowing, that is, hermeneutic engagement, the Text always interacts with a Pre-Text. The Text is perceived, interpreted, and understood from a matrix of pre-existing meaning, truth, and experience. No one comes to the Text in a vacuous space without pre-existing content. Pre-Text need not be understood in a constructivist sense by which Islam is shaped and re-shaped arbitrarily by what humans bring to the text to make sense of it. In fact, Ahmed recognizes, "*Muslims make Islam just as Islam makes Muslims* in all the evident complexity and contradiction of this process and engagement."[10] However, positing Pre-Text in the process of meaning-making and truth-knowing recognizes that what Islam is is mediated by pre-existing schemata.

There is a complex relationship between the variety of meanings the Text holds and the different degrees of ambiguity within, on one hand, and the pre-existing beliefs, attitudes, commitments, and information that the reader (and a community of readers) as a human and historical agent engages the Text with, on the other. No amount or kind of Pre-Text can completely erase that Islam means *submission* to God's will both etymologically and conceptually as the revelation inspired to Muhammad.[11] It cannot be seriously argued that Islam means, for example, libertinism or destitution. It can and has, however, been argued that Islam means endearing or loving submission. While this definition of Islam does not depart from

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[9] Ibid., 347.
[10] Ibid., 329.
[11] Sachiko Murata and William C. Chittick, *The Vision of Islam* (St. Paul: Paragon House, 1994), xiv.

the meaning the Text assigns, it does mediate and shape the Text-based meaning to bring into view, certain concerns and conditions (perhaps modern) that are Pre-Textual, namely the interest to pronounce a submission that is not based on attitudes and emotions of coercion and tyranny, but instead a submission that is characterized by a deeply felt recognition and (voluntary) acceptance of God's authority vis-à-vis human creation and the mutual love inhering in this relationship.

The engagement of Text with Pre-Text is dynamic with both Text and Pre-Text being capable of a range of hermeneutical and epistemological dispositions from relative qualification to domination in the process of meaning-making and truth-knowing. Ahmed identifies the Pre-Text of three groups of Muslims: Muslim philosophers, Sufis (mystics) and Muslim jurists. He argues, "for the philosophers, the meaning of the Text is entirely contingent on the larger and prior meaning of the Pre-Text – which is, and is knowable by, Reason. Reason in other words, *is* Revelation."[12] Muslim philosophers such as al-Farabi and Ibn Sina, subjected the text of the Quran to the prior truth and reality of Reason, that is the modes of reasoning and syllogisms used by Aristotle and Plato. In this sense the Pre-Text of the philosophers dominated the meaning-making process; the truth of the Pre-Text was brought to bear on the words of the text and meaning was only produced in conformity with the Pre-Text.

For the Sufis, "the Truth of the Pre-Text is accessible in and *via* the cosmos by *existential* knowing of the cosmos, which is the process of experiential annexation by the individual of his/her limited material existence into the limitless Universal Divine Existence (the Pre-Text)."[13]

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[12] Shahab Ahmed, *What Is Islam? The Importance of Being Islamic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 348.
[13] Ibid., 350.

Before engaging the Text, Sufis prior commitment to experiential apprehension of the Real-Truth shapes the way the Text is approached and interpreted. Like notions such as *kashf* (disclosure), *fanāʾ* (annihilation), and *waḥdat al-wujūd* (unity of existence) are experiential truths and realities that stand outside the Text and like the Reason of the philosophers are truths independent of the Text but engage the Text in ways that dominate its meaning.

For the jurists, those individuals theorizing and developing the *sharīʿa* (Islamic law), Ahmed argues, "In distinction from the philosophers and the Sufis, *the hermeneutical engagement of the discursive project of Islamic* fiqh-*law is almost entirely hermeneutical engagement with the Text*."[14] According to Ahmed, Islamic law produces truth and meaning from just the Text, or, in other words, the Text, for jurists, is the Pre-Text. It can be said that jurists were suspicious of Pre-Text as pretext for contaminating the meanings of the Text. However, the claim that the work of jurists only revolve around the Text without any presuppositions, assumptions, and pre-existing schemata has been convincingly deconstructed by Behnam Sadeghi and Sherman Jackson.[15] The work of theorizing and developing Islamic law like all worldly phenomena was mediated by Pre-Text of some form or another. Unlike the philosophers and Sufis, the discourse of the jurists was not patently preoccupied with other than the Text.[16] The preoccupation with the Text and the couching of epistemic and hermeneutic frameworks within and around the text makes it difficult to discern Pre-Text. Ahmed explains,

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[14] Ibid., 353.

[15] See Behnam Sadeghi, *The Logic of Law-Making in Islam: Women and Prayer in the Legal Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013) and Sherman Jackson, "Fiction and Formalism: Towards a Function Analysis of *Usūl al-Fiqh*" in *Studies in Islamic Legal Theory* ed. Bernard G. Weiss (Leiden; Brill, 2002), 177-201.

[16] Although the early books of Islamic legal theory clearly evince the influence of Greek thought and Aristotelian logic.

When the practitioners of Islamic legal methodology do seek to go beyond or behind the Text to identify underlying principles (*usūl,* singular *aṣl*) or values (*aḥkām,* singular *ḥukm*) or *rationes legis* (*ʿilal,* singular *ʿillah*), they do so *via* the statements of the Text, *via* legal methodology which is, in the first instance, a methodology of the Text, and seek to justify such Pre-Textual values as are identified by these methods as being self-evidently tied to and expressed in the Text – that is, to identify Pre-text as Text.[17]

So while jurists *justified* Pre-Textual values in terms of the Text, they nonetheless

hermeneutically and epistemologically engaged with Pre-Text. In other words, for Jurists the

Pre-Text did not dominate the Text (at least not patently), but this does not mean that Pre-

Textual truths and meanings did not condition and shape meaning and truth within and from

the Text.

The final source-object that is engaged to determine Islam and the category of Islamic is

Con-Text. Ahmed reminds us, "Hermeneutical engagements, do not, of course, take place in a

vacuum: rather any hermeneutical engagement with Revelation is an act that is carried out in a

historical context."[18] Hermeneutical engagement with the Text and Pre-Text account for

meaning-making for the self. The self engages the Text and may be the active repository of Pre-

Text. Con-Text refers to the historically generated meanings of those outside the self with

revelation. Ahmed explains, "Con-Text is the body of meaning that is the product and outcome

of previous hermeneutical engagement with Revelation. *Context of Revelation is, in other*

words, that whole field of complex vocabulary of meaning of Revelation that have been

produced in the course of the human and historical hermeneutical engagement with Revelation,

[17] Shahab Ahmed, *What Is Islam? The Importance of Being Islamic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 353.
[18] Ibid., 356.

and which are thus *already present as Islam.*"[19] As one engages the Text and recognizes the

interaction of Pre-Text with the Text, one must also recognize the previous engagements in

history. A clear example of Con-Text is the voluminous exegetical literature on the Quran

(*tafsīr*) and traditions of the Prophet. Such literature spans over a thousand years and across

ideological, theological, and linguistic boundaries. This Con-Text shows us how Muslims have

engaged with the Text and made meaning in the past. Con-Text is not just limited to literature

or exegetical literature, but rather consists of all the different cohering and conflicting ways

Muslims have made meaning of themselves and Revelation through the entire gamut of human

pursuits, whether it be verbal poetry or the non-verbal whirling of dervishes.

Without Con-Text any conceptualization of Islam would suffer from individual

subjectivities that can only produce a narrow and personal identification with Islam. By

recognizing and engaging the meanings generated by Con-Text, that is, by the diversity of other

Muslim expressions and engagements with the Text, the individual becomes capable of learning

and appreciating the meaning-making and truth-knowing formulations of others within their

own particular contexts but of the same Revelation. For the individual any conceptualization of

Islam must be mediated by what Islam has meant to others and not just to the self.

To conceptualize Islam as hermeneutical engagement with Text, Pre-Text, and Con-Text

helps one determine the boundaries, space, and, importantly, for the purposes of engaging

with SDT, the malleability or concreteness of the meanings and truths generated. One might be

inclined or committed to the truths of SDT (e.g. positing a basic psychological need for

autonomy or insisting that providing a rationale facilitates internalization) by which they serve

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[19] Ibid.

as Pre-Text and are relied on to make sense and meaning of revelation or the Text. Depending

on the degree of commitment, such Pre-Textual SDT truths may dominate over the Text or

qualify and shape meaning in more subtle ways. Likewise, depending on the degree of

commitment to the meanings of the Text, other Pre-Text, or Con-Text, the claims and assertions

of SDT may more readily be challenged or condtioned. Through conceptualizing Islam as a

hermeneutical engagement with Text, Pre-Text, and Con-Text, the truths of SDT can be made

meaningful in terms of Islam. In other words, the truth-claims of SDT can be made meaningful

Islamically either as engagement with Text, Pre-Text, or Con-Text.

While Ahmed's conceptualization opens up Islam to a wide range of meanings and

expressions thus possibly absorbing or contesting a wider range of phenomena, it does not

necessarily devolve into a project of islamization of all input in which Islam must speak directly

to the engaged object or source. Since Islam is more than just the Quran and the traditions of

the Prophet in Ahmed's conceptualization; that it includes the large contents of what can be

considered Pre-Text and Con-Text, it may seem to be accompanied by a hermeneutical

hegemony that doesn't recognize any boundaries and space. However, it is not true that Islam,

even if it is conceptualized as hermeneutical engagement with Text, Pre-Text, and Con-Text, or

even more limited fashion as primarily Islamic law (*sharīʿa*), is incapable of recognizing truth,

knowledge, and meaning outside of itself. In Ahmed's conceptualization, the category of Pre-

Text can contain truth and meaning that is not embedded within the Quran and the traditions

of the Prophet.[20] In other words, there is a space where Islam does not make a normative or

ethical claim about the object/subject being engaged. It does not, for example, have a position

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[20] Ibid., 346.

on the dominant ways in which people morally disengage although the Quran does describe

some particular ways that humans justify their misdeeds.[21] Likewise, it does not make any claim

on the existence of extra-terrestrial life. These issues and the many areas the revelation does

not touch on offer space for knowledge, truth, and meaning to be found outside of scripture.

Jackson calls this space the domain of the Islamic secular.

The Islamic secular is that space that is recognized by the *sharīʿa* as a self-conscious

category "*that for concrete knowledge of which one can rely neither upon the scriptural sources*

of Sharia nor their proper extension via the tools enshrined by Islamic legal methodology (usūl al-

fiqh)."[22] The production of humanistic knowledge that generates truth and meaning can find a

space respected by the *sharīʿa* as that which is independent of the Quran and hadith as far as the

particular means are concerned but are "not necessarily outside of God's adjudicative gaze."[23]

Issues such as the significance and viability of universal health care, immigration policy, building

codes, what constitutes just spousal support for a divorcee, and arguably, as we shall see, what

constitutes human nature are not readily answered by scripture in a manner that is functionally

concretized, but at the same time do not escape 'God's adjudicative gaze.' Whether through

Ahmed's conceptualization of Islam as hermeneutical engagement with Text, Pre-Text, and Con-

Text or Jackson's category of the Islamic secular, it is clear that a theory of motivation such as

SDT and internalization such as OIT can be engaged Islamically through different epistemological

and hermeneutic postures. In the remaining sections we will explore the hermeneutical and

epistemological boundaries and meanings that animate the engagement between Islam in this

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[21] See for example, 2:12.

[22] Sherman Jackson, "The Islamic Secular," *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* 34, No. 2 (2017), 11.

[23] Ibid., 1.

wide sense (and also very scripturally-based sense) and SDT's discourses on human nature and autonomy.

Self-Determination Theory and Islamic Discourses on Human Nature

As mentioned in the second chapter, SDT posits a particular conceptualization of human nature; one which is centered on the psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness.[24] This is not to suggest that SDT reduces human nature to only psychological needs, and these three psychological needs in particular. In fact, SDT conceptualizes human nature that includes contradictory characterizations such as "activity *and* passivity, integrity *and* fragmentation, caring *and* cruelty" and physiological needs.[25] However, the central claims around psychological needs as basic needs "is to make certain claims about both universality and priority and suggest commonalities in terms of human nature."[26] In other words, psychological needs are front and center in SDTs conceptualization of human nature and motivation while physiological needs such as eating and drinking are characterized as deficit needs that only motivate action when a person is deprived of satisfying such needs. The basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness are characterized as growth needs that do not necessitate deficiency to motivate action.[27]

It is important to recognize that SDT is first and foremost a *psychological* theory of motivation and its discourse of human nature is heavily skewed toward a psychological

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[24] See Ryan and Deci, *Self-Determination Theory: Basic Psychological Needs in Motivation, Development, and Wellness*, 81.
[25] Ibid., 9-10.
[26] Ibid., 81.
[27] Ibid., 84.

conceptualization. While this point should warrant a limited and partial understanding of human nature (as a particular psychological conceptualization informed by SDT) and, therefore, create space for (potentially) complementary components that permit a more fuller conceptualization of human nature, this may be confounded given that SDT's discourse on human nature is so extensively and thoroughly dominated by solely psychological considerations (and some space for physiological drives), and, furthermore, their putative objectivity, universality, and priority. Not to mention that certain assertions about human nature made by SDT may be more deserving of being challenged and not simply delimited and integrated into a more fuller concept. At the very least, however, it is important to recognize that any claim that human nature can be reduced to psychological drives or even the larger discourse SDT produces around it, should warrant a healthy skepticism that invites a more critical and fuller account of human nature. For our purposes this serves as an appropriate entry point to relate Islamic conceptions of human nature to SDT's psychologically-based conception.

Just as SDT makes explicit claims about human nature, there are discourses on what can be called human nature in both Islamic scripture (i.e. Text) and the works of Muslim scholars (i.e. Con-Text). The first question we must recognize is whether searching for "human nature" in Islam involves somewhat of an ahistorical pursuit insofar as the larger discourse of "human nature" may be a modern, Western project that has a particular epistemic and hermeneutic lineage. While modern discourse on human nature flourished and was sedimented by a more systematic and defined treatment in the 20th and 21st centuries coinciding with the rise of natural sciences in the West, there are plenty of references made by pre-modern Muslim

scholars to "natural" tendencies and inclinations that humans have and some level of organized

thoughts on these issues that it may be argued that some parallel discourse on what may be

termed "human nature" is discernible in Islamic classical though prior to the 20th and 21st

centuries.[28] This does not mean, of course, that such discourses don't emerge from different

historical conditions that gave rise to them and shaped them in particular and unique ways, but

it does mean that it is possible to relate these discourses with one another in ways that

highlight both areas of concurrence and conflict.

To begin, the Islamic notion of *fiṭra* serves as the starting point for discourses on human

nature. The *fiṭra* tradition is often quoted by scholars in a variety of contexts and matters but

since it explicitly makes reference to a primordial disposition and socializing influences that

affect one's development, it is appropriate to place this as a central text in an Islamic

conceptualization of human nature. In this tradition, it is reported by Abu Hurayra that the

Prophet said, "Every new-born child is born in a state of fitrah. Then his parents make him a

Jew, a Christian or a Magian, just as an animal is born intact. Do you observe any among them

that are maimed (at birth)?"[29] The Arabic word *fiṭra* is derived from the radicals *fa ṭa ra* and

etymologically means "he clave, split, slit, rent or cracked."[30] Linguistically, it also means to

originate, that is, to cause something to exist for the first time and to impress, stamp, seal, and

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[28] See for example, al-Ghazālī who writes, "Reason knows the way to safety, while human instinct (*al-ṭabʿ*) urges one to travel that route. For the love of self and disdain of pain is ingrained in every human. Thus, you have erred in stating that reason (*al-ʿaql*) is a motivator (*dāʿin*). Nay, reason is only a guide (*hādin*), while impulses and motives (*al-bawāʿith wa al-dawāʿī*) issue from the self (*al-nafs*), based on information provided by reason." Cited in Sherman Jackson, *On the Boundaries of Theological Tolerance in Islam: Abū Hāmid al-Ghazālī's Fayṣal al-Tafriqa*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 82, note 132.
[29] Cited in Yasien Mohamed, *Fitra: The Islamic Concept of Human Nature* (London: Ta-Ha Publishers Ltd., 1996), 14.
[30] Ibid.

print.[31] The term *faṭara* and *ṭabaʿ* have similar meanings signifying engraving and creating with a disposition to something. The term *fiṭra*, therefore, in its linguistic sense means to originate something for the first time and having an inborn natural disposition.[32] In this sense the term *fiṭra* in the *ḥadīth* above refers to a new-born being born in a natural, primordial disposition.

There are other variations of the report mentioned above, but they all share in common the use of the term *fiṭra* and then mention the socializing influence of parents that rear the child from a state of *fiṭra* to being a Jew, Christian, or Magian. The term, *fiṭra* also occurs in the Quran in *sūra* 30:30 which in Arabic reads, "*fa-wajhaka li'l-dīni ḥanīfan fiṭrat Allāhi allatī faṭara al-nāsa ʿalayhā, lā tabdīla li-khalqi'llāhi, dhālika 'l-dīnu al-qayyimu wa-lākin akthara 'l-nāsi lā yaʿlamūna*," which may be translated as, "so [Prophet] as a man of pure faith, stand firm and true in your devotion to the religion. This is the natural disposition [*fiṭra*] God instilled [*faṭara*] in mankind – there is no altering God's creation – and this is the right religion, though most people do not realize it."[33] Muslim scholars have relied primarily on this verse and the prophetic report to inform their views of the *fiṭra* as a natural, primordial disposition of the human being to recognize, believe in, and be devoted to God.[34] In their discourses on *fiṭra* Muslim scholars elaborate the theologically and spiritually grounded nature of man by further relating the Quranic verses using the term *ḥanīf* to the prophetic report and the Quranic verse of 30:30. The term *ḥanīf* occurs in the Quran several times in general and in specific reference to Abraham, and denotes someone who believes and is devoted only to one God.[35] It can be

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[31] Ibid., 14-15.
[32] Ibid., 15.
[33] Based on Abdel Haleem's translation. See M.A. Abdel Haleem. *The Qur'an: A New Translation*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 258-259.
[34] See Yasien Mohamed, *Fitra: The Islamic Concept of Human Nature* (London: Ta-Ha Publishers Ltd., 1996), 35-81.
[35] See 3:95; 4:125: 6:79; 10:105; 16:120.

argued that the central preoccupation of Muslim scholars in the discourses of *fiṭra* concern the innate human propensity to recognize, believe, and be devoted to one God, and as mentioned in the prophetic report, only after being socialized (usually via parents as the primary socializing agents), is this propensity disturbed.

While the concept of *fiṭra* serves as a locus for notions of human nature and while Muslim scholars have tended to regard the concept, at least in a foundational way, as a theological and spiritual innate disposition towards belief in one God, the discourses on *fiṭra* varies to a great extent as some Muslim scholars have construed the term in an expansionist way that largely overlaps with the notion of human nature while other scholars have construed it in a limited way by which *fiṭra* only represents some part of what may be considered human nature. The discourses of *fiṭra* informed primarily by the prophetic tradition and the verses of the Quran mentioned above indicate a human nature that has an innate, moral propensity to gravitate toward belief and devotion to one God. Other discourses of *fiṭra* expand beyond this issue. Some scholars discuss *fiṭra* as a natural inborn capacity to discern good and evil and to be predisposed to one or the other.[36] Other discourses on *fiṭra* relate to the question of free-will, determinism, and responsibility, and whether humans have the capacity to make choices.[37] These conceptualizations of *fiṭra* speak of human nature in terms of theological and ethical inborn capacities. However, at least one scholar expands the discourse of *fiṭra* to include a biological dimension.[38] This is important and shows that some Muslim scholars were willing to elaborate other aspects of human nature and subsume them under the concept of *fiṭra*. Some

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[36] Ibid., 30.
[37] Ibid., 36-37.
[38] Ibid., 79.

scholars identified epistemological modes of knowledge as part of one's *fiṭra*.[39] It seems that

some Muslim scholars were perfectly content in opening up the term *fiṭra* to include other

aspects of what can be considered human nature other than the theological meaning directly

related to it in the prophetic tradition and verses of the Quran. In this respect, it may be

possible to speak of *fiṭra* in an expansionist way to include other aspects of human nature and

possibly including the description of psychological needs stipulated by SDT.

Even if one espouses a narrower construction of *fiṭra* to include only theological and

ethical inborn capacities, any descriptions of human nature beyond these capacities may very

well be integrated into a larger construction of human nature. Interestingly, Ibn Taymiyya when

discussing the prophetic tradition on *fiṭra* explains the socializing phenomena of how a child is

born in the *fiṭra* (and for Ibn Taymiyya this means having been born with the innate disposition

to recognize and be devoted to one God and have a proclivity to moral behavior), and then

made into a Jew, Christian, or Magian by her parents. He explains that a child will adopt the

faith of his parents, "because of his need to survive. He must have someone who educates him,

and only his parents had taken the task, so he follows them because he has to."[40] Ibn Taymiyya

clearly identifies a human need, specifically the survival instinct or need as the part of human

nature that drives a child to be attached to a caring figure such as parents. Because of this

human need and the care afforded by parents, a child satisfies the need and the satisfaction

leads the child to adopt the value system and beliefs of his caretaker. Ibn Taymiyya does not

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[39] Frank Griffel, ""Al-Ghazālī's Use of 'Original Human Disposition" (*Fiṭra*) and Its Background in the Teachings of al-Fārābī and Avicenna." *The Muslim World* 102, No. 1 (January 2012), 1-32.
[40] Livnat Holtzman, "Human Choice, Divine Guidance and the *Fiṭra* Tradition: The Use of Hadith in Theological Treatises by Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya," in *Ibn Taymiyya and His Times* ed. Shahab Ahmed and Youssef Rapoport (Karachi: Oxford University Press), 173.

describe this need as part of the *fiṭra* per se, nonetheless, he recognizes it as part of the natural

make-up of a child. This seems to suggest that Muslim scholars conceptualized aspects of what

can be considered human nature without subsuming them under the concept of *fiṭra*.

Moreover, the Quran explains certain aspects of human behavior and human nature

that can help inform one's notion of human nature without using the term *fiṭra*. For example,

the Quran explains that "God as not put for any man two hearts inside his body."[41] This verse

can be interpreted to mean that integration and wholeness are deep internal propensities that

we are created with, and are thus paradigmatic dispositions of human nature while

fragmentation and compartmentalized identities are pathological. In fact, the Quran talks about

three types of souls along a continuum of moral attitude. Beginning from a point of proclivity to

moral disengagement, the Quran describes the soul commanded to evil (*nafs al-ammāra bi-l*

suūʾ) as a soul that is inclined to evil and is incapable of resisting temptation and instead directs

its energy toward evil pursuits.[42] This soul or self is dominated by vain desires and unbridled

passions. The second type of soul is called the self-reproaching soul (*nafs al-lawwāma*) that is

conscious of its own imperfections and is riddled with guilt, disapproval, self-appraisal, etc.[43]

The third soul is called the soul at peace (*nafs al-muṭmaʾinna*) that has come to terms and

embraced God's will and has achieved a balance of pursuing one's self-interest and restraining

one's evil tendencies as a recognition of God's ultimate control and reality.[44] Muslim scholars

have produced voluminous commentaries on these descriptions and offered competing

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[41] 30:4.
[42] 12:53
[43] 75:2
[44] 89:27

conceptualizations of human nature based on them. There are many other references to strong

human proclivities and behavior in the Quran that can inform one's conception of human

nature, but the point here is to recognize that such conceptualizations do not necessarily have

to be a function of the *fiṭra*. When searching for conceptualizations of human nature in Islamic

Text and Con-Text, one will necessarily find a complex web of meanings that are both based on

Islamic scripture and also a close empirical and imaginative examination of human behavior and

tendency. This milieu offers space to relate such Islamic concepts, whether of human nature or

fiṭra, to other conceptualizations (such as SDT's) that emerge from other value systems.

Autonomy, competence, and relatedness may be valid psychological needs (and in some

form are certainly valid), but it is important not to reduce human nature to such needs nor to

make well-being and ill-being contingent solely on satisfaction or deprivation of such needs.

Such a proposition risks overlooking perhaps other parts of human nature, whether such parts

can be classified as needs and meet all the requirements for basic needs as Deci and Ryan

specified, or represent perennial tendencies such as the need to dominate. Islamic

conceptualizations of human nature, whether contained in the concept of *fiṭra* or informed by

other descriptions in Text and Con-Text enrich the discourse and demonstrate the possibility of

meaningfully and critically relating to SDT's conceptualization. In the final section we will

consider how the need for autonomy as a basic need defining human nature is conceptualized

within SDT and how it may relate to Islam's central message of submission.

Autonomy and Submission

The psychological needs of relatedness and competence are crucial for internalizing

external regulations and values, but these needs, as posited by Deci and Ryan, are not as

controversial and may be more easily coopted by religious discourses. In fact, as we saw Ibn

Taymiyya essentially invokes the need for relatedness when discussing how a child who is born

on the *fiṭra* is socialized in becoming a Jew, Christian, or Magian. Likewise, the human

propensity to act on the environment and feel that our efforts produce effects as the core

aspect of the need for competence is also not patently problematic for Islamic beliefs and

values (even the predeterministic current in Islamic thought had to come to terms with human

responsibility for its beliefs and actions). This is not to suggest that SDT's full conceptualization

and discourse of the needs for relatedness and competence, including internalizing strategies

such as providing unconditional love, acknowledging feelings, providing a rationale, and

encouraging critical thinking should be uncritically absorbed. The full discourse, including these

strategies, necessitates a deeper (and much longer) engagement to qualify what these terms

mean and examine their concrete manifestations, which we will have to leave for another

project. Unlike the needs for relatedness and competence, the need for autonomy, as

conceived with SDT, seems to indicate a prima facie incongruence with the central meaning of

Islam as submission. Moreover, while the need for competence and especially the need for

relatedness are crucial to internalization, the need for autonomy figures to heavily mediate

internalization in an increasingly expressivist culture.[45] For these reasons we will seek to

mutually and critically engage the psychological need for autonomy with the central meaning of

Islam as submission. By doing so we will see that neither human autonomy nor submission are

inherently diametrically opposed concepts and phenomena, and from an Islamic vantage point,

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[45] For more on expressivist moral culture see James Hunter, *The Death of Character: Moral Education in an Age Without Good or Evil*. (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 157-175.

discern the qualified place, value, and meaning of autonomy within a superstructure of

qualifying and conditioning Islamic concepts and meanings (derived largely from Text and Con-

Text).

Deci and Ryan acknowledge that positing autonomy as a basic psychological need as

part of human nature has been particularly controversial.[46] SDT posits autonomy as a universal

and objective need that is part of human nature and is not contingent on particular cultures.

Detractors argue that the concept of autonomy is deeply Western and individualistic. This

critique seems to have forced Deci and Ryan to clarify and qualify the concept of autonomy as a

psychological need. They argue that autonomy literally means "self-governing" and "self-

regulating" and it expresses the need to feel volitional, that is, to feel that the person's

behavior is "fully self-endorsed," "rather than being coerced compelled, or seduced by forces

external to the self."[47] They do not differentiate between governing and regulating, and instead

seem to stress the "self" in the process of internalization. Furthermore, they recognize that an

individual may not consist of an integrated, whole self; that there may be diverse and

conflicting motivations that inhere within the individual. For this reason they do not consider

behavior that is produced by way of "one part of the personality dominating others" as

autonomous.[48] To be truly autonomous, the individual must endorse actions "that are

experienced as congruent expressions of the self."[49] The concept of autonomy as such seems to

imply an individual that has clearly and decisively determined it's values and knows its "self" so

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[46] See Ryan and Deci, *Self-Determination Theory: Basic Psychological Needs in Motivation, Development, and Wellness*, 561.
[47] Ibid., 97.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Ibid.

well that it is able to detect and identify incongruous forces not just from the outside, but also those that reside within the self. While it may be true that Islamic scripture seems to urge such a coherent and cogent self, as alluded to earlier, in the concept of *nafs al-muṭmaʾinna*, relativists, post-modernists, and I would argue, that religious scripturalists (and the text of the Quran itself) push back against the assumption that the self is, paradigmatically, a fully conscious and integrated whole. If the concept of autonomy rests on the notion of the self as such, then it may be reasonably argued that it only offers a partial insight that is actually fraught with problems when billed as universal and objective. In fact, this point highlights the problem with the notion of the "authentic" or "true" self. We will revisit this issue shortly after discussing how the concept of autonomy relates to Islamic discourse.

The idea of relating autonomy to Islam is both curious and seductive. A religion whose very name means submission and surrendering seems at first blush to offer little space for autonomy as crafted within SDT. Kenneth Cragg explains, "The religion of 'the Lord of the worlds' is a perpetual struggle against all false absolutes, the chief being a sense of human autonomy."[50] It should be noted that the term "autonomy" has different connotations and not assume that Cragg's simple use of the term carries the meanings that SDT affords it. Nonetheless, Cragg seems to observe that the notion that the self as the ultimate and/or primary referent is antithetical to Islamic theology which clearly places "the Lord of the worlds" as the ultimate referent. Gordon Allport goes even further, claiming, "In the last analysis religion is a sense of appeal, dependence, surrender."[51] That religion, and certainly Islam, (re)-

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[50] Kenneth Cragg and R. Marston Speight, *The House of Islam*, 3rd ed. (Belmont: Wadsworth/Thomas Learning, 2002), 18.
[51] Gordon Allport, *The Individual and His Religion*, 3.

orients the individual to dependence on and surrendering to God is to recognize that

autonomy, if it is to mean dependence only on one's self and surrendering to none, and

instead, to feel free to act without external restraints or even internal countervailing forces, is

antithetical to Islam, most certainly, and to the notion of religion that essentially involves

dependence and surrender to other than the self. But the question is whether autonomy, at

least as a psychological need posited in SDT, truly means independence, self-sufficiency, and

separateness and whether Islam as submission and surrendering to God leaves no room for

individual human wants, desires, and pursuits.

As mentioned, Deci and Ryan seemed to have qualified the meaning of autonomy after

criticisms issuing from critical theory and post-modernism perspectives. In their first book,

Intrinsic Motivation and Self-Determination in Human Behavior, published in 1985, there is no

acknowledgement of criticisms of the need for autonomy. However, in their most recent book

published in 2017, they spend considerable ink on clarifying, distinguishing, and ultimately

qualifying the "particularly controversial" concept of autonomy as a human need. They insist

that "these criticisms have really been against the concept of autonomy conflated with other

concepts such as independence, separateness, self-sufficiency, or the perpetual straw man of

'free will.'"[52] To address these criticisms, Deci and Ryan qualify autonomy in multiple ways.

Interestingly, and most importantly, since autonomy seems to necessitate a wholly integrated

and authentic self in which one part of a personality is not struggling to overcome another part

(which is a matter of willpower and not autonomy), truly autonomous behavior requires

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[52] Ryan and Deci, *Self-Determination Theory: Basic Psychological Needs in Motivation, Development, and Wellness*, 98.

reflectivity to understand the agents and forces that inform and influence the values, beliefs, and behaviors one endorses and makes one's own. They clarify, "A critical point to be derived is that there are *degrees of autonomy* and that the extent of autonomy is often dependent upon the extent to which the individual has mindfully and reflectively identified with and integrated a particular regulation or value."[53] So autonomy is not simply what the self chooses or desires, but what the self chooses or desires after reflectively considering different factors around the issues involved in choosing or desiring. It is often difficult to identify one's true and authentic voice as external agents and forces incessantly mediate and interact in complex ways with the self. Much of our likes and dislikes, viewpoints, behaviors, etc. are products of external influences. We may internalize external values and regulations to the degree they become natural, normal, and even normative. At some point one may be inclined to reflect on the contents one has internalized (usually due to some stimulus in the external environment), and re-consider the extent to which one might want to identify and integrate the value/regulation with one's self. This process is complex and often cyclical, and while qualifying autonomy as "reflective endorsement" of a value or regulation is helpful in some ways and may resonate with the Quranic imploration to constantly reflect on what is happening inside ourselves and outside ourselves[54], it still seems to suggest a subjective quality of autonomy since people reflect in different ways and with different considerations and conditions.

Deci and Ryan also qualify autonomy by distinguishing it from independence and freedom. Independence and freedom imply a self that is self-sufficient and in no need for

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[53] Ibid., 56.
[54] See for example, Quranic verses 37:138, 51:49, 38:29, 30:8, 30:21, 16:69.

others, and separated from the environment. Deci and Ryan qualify autonomy to distinguish it from independence and freedom by arguing that autonomy and relatedness or even autonomy and dependence or interdependence are not antithetical.[55] They point out that autonomy is not anti-relational and does not entail "being subject to no external influences" (e.g. one's parents, teachers, role models, or leaders).[56] Rather, a person can autonomously adopt and follow another person by relying and depending on their guidance, for example. Likewise, "a person can volitionally endorse duty, care, and responsibility to others, as well as dependence on them."[57] Autonomy is not just about choosing but also relinquishing choice. If a person chooses to relinquish choice, this may be considered an autonomous act. Autonomy must, thus, be seen as being embedded within a relational construct and does not connote separateness. So for example, caring (in its paradigmatic form) is seen as an expression of autonomy although the act of caring (in its pathological form according to SDT) can also be due to feeling compelled by external agents. Caring for a spouse, children, parents, and community members is considered "one of the most important expressions of our autonomy" when it is done out of identification and positive regard for others and their interests.[58] In other words, caring for others does not entail sacrificing one's autonomy.

If autonomy can be qualified in such a manner as to include relational dependency and reflection, then Islam as submission and surrender need not be construed to be antithetical to such a notion. As mentioned earlier, some Muslims explain Islam not simply as submission and

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[55] Ryan and Deci, *Self-Determination Theory: Basic Psychological Needs in Motivation, Development, and Wellness*, 72.
[56] Ibid., 57.
[57] Ibid., 56.
[58] Ibid., 300.

surrender to God, but as a "loving submission," "willing submission," or "peaceful submission."[59] These attempts to qualify "submission" are important and are not unlike the attempts of Deci and Ryan to qualify "autonomy." Many Muslim scholars, past and present, explain Islam as submission in two ways. First, that all created things submit to God and will and the question of assent does not enter the equation in this realm. Second, that human beings are implored to reflect on the multitude signs of God and volitionally recognize the reality of God and find themselves dependent on God and desiring to enhance their dependence.[60] In English literature using the adjectives, "loving," "willing," and "peaceful" to modify submission indicates this second phenomenological meaning of Islam which seems to recognize the need for autonomy as conceptualized in SDT. Submitting to God is then not some coercive demand but a volitional attitude, urged by the *fiṭra* and supported through reflection. To recognize the place and value of autonomy in submitting to God is to condition and qualify the concept of autonomy within a relational configuration where the self, its interests, desires, wants, and pursuits are meaningful and valued insofar they are reconciled with the reality of God and God's order. In other words, the need for autonomy need not be conceptualized as a need to assert and pursue individual interests by defying external sources of authority and the values and regulations they endorse, but rather, as a need for the self to pursue its interests by being fully conscious and reflective of the reality of God and the agents and forces of socialization that seek to form and re-form our individual interests.

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[59] See for example Abdallah Sahin, *New Directions in Islamic Education: Pedagogy & Identity Formation* (*Western Muslims and the Future of Islam*, 76.
[60] Ibid.

Deci and Ryan also recognize how social contexts, both pervasive and proximal, differentially facilitate and thwart the need for autonomy and the other psychological needs. It seems to me that social contexts, especially pervasive social contexts also differentially qualify the meaning of autonomy itself. Deci and Ryan distinguish between collectivist and individualistic cultures. Collectivist cultures privilege group and community interests over individual interests and emphasize the importance of duty and obligation.[61] Individualist cultures herald the significance of the right to personally pursue one's interests and express one's values and individual identity without an expectation or demand of conformity. Generally speaking, Eastern cultures are considered to be collectivists while their Western counterparts are considered to be individualists. While these are certainly not monolithic cultures, these general descriptions seem to reflect commonly shared values among each culture. Deci and Ryan speak extensively about how autonomy is not merely a value in individualistic cultures but also is important in collectivists cultures.[62] While this may be true, it seems that significant differences exist in the shape and form autonomy takes in these different cultures. So for example, in certain collectivists societies personal choice, while not nonexistent, does not have the same meaning and significance in Western individualistic societies such as Western Europe or the United States. It seems that in individualistic societies, autonomy is an organizing and hegemonic value within a certain hierarchy.

Conversely, if we look at Islamic scripture and attempt to discern an organizing and hegemonic discourse and value equivalent in its meaning and significance to autonomy in

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[61] Ryan and Deci, *Self-Determination Theory: Basic Psychological Needs in Motivation, Development, and Wellness*, 346.
[62] Ibid., 564-590.

individualistic societies, it would seem the emphasis on self-restraint is more apparent. One can

offer several verses in the Quran that warn of the human propensity to follow vain desires and

their devastating effects on the self, others, and natural environment, and emphasize instead

the value self-restraint. On the other hand, discourse on autonomy is more difficult to ascertain

(although certain qualified meanings of autonomy may be detected). So for example, the Quran

mentions, "As for whoever exceeded the limits and preferred the life of this world, surely his

abode will be the Fire; and as for whoever feared to stand before his Lord and restrained the

desires of his self, surely his abode will be in the Garden."[63] Verses like this are commonplace in

the Quran and seem to contrast the perils of human autonomy when it is not sufficiently

qualified, on one hand, and the importance of restraining one's expressive desires and wants.

To be clear, it is not that SDT does not value self-restraint, but unlike the Quranic

message, it does not make excess in human behavior (and the perils of an expressivist culture

where autonomy is the ultimate value), and the logic of self-restraint the thrust of its discourse.

Deci and Ryan recognize that self-restraint, while not intrinsically motivated, is essential to

socialized life and even personal well-being.[64] If every individual or group sought to assert

autonomy as a consistent and natural expression of their human need to make their own

choices, one can certainly expect a divisive and broken society where respect of the other is

routinely violated. In the phenomenal world, no individual or group can truly be autonomous in

every aspect as it must exist with the oppositional wants, desires, and pursuits of others. Deci

and Ryan spend several pages problematizing self-control and self-restraint since "some forms

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[63] Translation of 79:39-40.
[64] Ryan and Deci, *Self-Determination Theory: Basic Psychological Needs in Motivation, Development, and Wellness*, 178.

of self-control do not represent autonomy,"[65] and proffer, instead, the notion of self-regulation.

For Deci and Ryan, self-control "typically entails external and introjected regulations.

Introjection in particular is an internally controlled form of regulation… whereas true self-regulation refers to autonomous regulation consisting of more fully integrated regulation and intrinsic motivation."[66] While this distinction may be problematized and may, it allows Deci and Ryan to argue that "self-controlling forms of regulation will be vitality depleting… and the more autonomous self-regulation will be less depleting and at times even energizing."[67] This point is important since self-restraint and self-control can lead to fatigue. If an individual is constantly resisting and refraining from acting on their interests, at some point the organism will be fatigued adversely affecting well-being and the prospect of upholding the external regulation it uses to suppress such desires. Phenomenally, it seems to be true that one can experience self-restraint as either controlling or as a volitional act integrated with other parts of the self. The terminological difference between "self-control" and "self-regulation" to capture this difference is helpful in many ways, but at the same time seems to underestimate the phenomenal reality where self-control and self-restraint are important behaviors, even when experienced in a controlling way, for personal and social integrity and well-being. We can better appreciate self-control if we reflect on our materialistic society that unrelentingly stimulates and seduces, urging often unreflective reactions.

In conclusion, the analysis above relating SDT's conception of autonomy and Islam's essential meaning as submission and its value on self-restraint involves mutual critical

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[65] Ibid., 187.
[66] Ibid., 259.
[67] Ibid.

correlation whereby the meanings and functional significance of these concepts are qualified as part of a hierarchical superstructure. As we have seen, SDT's superstructure privileges autonomy while also qualifying its meaning in important ways. Likewise, Islamic Text and Con-Text privileges submission and the value of self-restraint while qualifying them and creating space for human volition and interests. It seems to me that while Islam certainly recognizes the true, authentic self as expressed in the idea of *nafs al-muṭmaʾinna*, it sees the individual in a trajectory of potential growth, whereby its values, beliefs, and interests are not present in fixed states, but are often vacillating and susceptible to all types of stimuli directing it one way or another. True integration is wrought with difficulties and obstacles. The environment changes as do our values. What we hold to be true and a part of our autonomous selves, even though it may be arrived at through reflection, may be upended by external factors and internal urgings. Autonomy, even as qualified by SDT, in such a context, would be difficult to herald as a central concept and basic human need. However, autonomy in a more qualified sense as perhaps volitional assent that is subjective in its nature may still fill an important role in a superstructure informed by Islamic Text and Con-Text, and may even function as Pre-Text. On the other hand, while SDT recognizes that the environment and perhaps even internal urges may act as controlling agents adversely affecting the well-being of the individual, it seems to rely heavily on the assumption of a fully integrated, true and authentic self. In such a context, autonomy, as a psychological need to volitionally and reflectively adopt and endorse external values and regulations is vital to effective functioning and well-being.

Conclusion

The challenge of making commitments in an uncertain world seems to be more pronounced as we witness groups all over the world struggling with diversity and attempting to assert autonomy according to their own beliefs and values. As our society grows more deeply polarized, it seems clear that we have a considerable way to go to better understand how autonomy, authentic belonging, and control can be integrated in our personal and social lives. For Muslims, there are felt needs to preserve one's religious identity, belong in the modern world, and authentically express and project Islam into the future. SDT and its constituent theories and ideas on human nature, psychological needs, internalization, content, and context offer rich and powerful explanatory tools that can help Muslims in all three projects.

SDT and its mini theories are premised on secular biases and while its proponents have attempted to relate to religious discourse to some extent, its approach is heavily skewed toward viewing religious values and regulations as comprising cultural contexts which may or may not adversely affect internalization. On its face this does not seem to be problematic given that much of religious values and regulations are external input that can either be outrightly rejected or fully absorbed and endorsed. However, SDT makes the psychological needs of autonomy, relatedness, and competence as the arbiters of the process of internalization. In fact, these needs are cast as absolute and universal not in some general sense but in a very particular hermeneutic form. To be clear, the founders of SDT have qualified and pruned the meaning of its admittedly most controversial need of autonomy, and in doing so, seem to hedge against some of the criticisms directed at this need. Nonetheless, SDT's theory of human

nature and human needs (the basis and backdrop for its process of internalization) rests on secular assumptions.

While this may, in and of itself, dissuade some religious-minded individuals from serious engagement, there seems to be significant overlap with religious discourse. Islam offers a particular way of life comprised of truth claims, beliefs, values, and behaviors that depends on their internalization (as does any religion). Islam, as hermeneutical engagement with Text, Con-Text, and Pre-Text also makes truth claims about human nature and human needs, some of which may compete with SDT's conceptualizations. In this dissertation I attempted to lay the groundwork for a deeply meaningful engagement between the various ideas of SDT and Islamic discourses.

This groundwork included not taking for granted the explanatory power of a modern theory and simply applying it on Islam and Muslims, but instead building proper groundwork that closely examines central premises and assumptions dialogically and critically. The relationship between human knowledge and religious knowledge in many ways echoes, and is an iteration of, the age-old reason versus revelation debate. For Muslims, as for most religionists, this is not a mutually exclusive construct, but one that offers multiple configurations of integration. At the end, using the iterations of what can be termed as mutual critical correlation allows us to distinguish between metaphysical add-on often connected to humanistic theories and also human constructed knowledge attached to theological and religious discourse. This recognition opens the door for deeper and more meaningful engagement.

The groundwork also includes analyzing SDT and Islamic discourses on human nature and their respective central principles of autonomy and submission. Using a dialogical and mutually critical approach, the first order of business is to examine these concepts hermeneutically in terms of what they mean in relation to one another and in relation to other ideas to arrive at a qualified meaning that exists not as some isolated concept but as part of an epistemic and hermeneutic superstructure. As such, autonomy as crafted in SDT, while qualified in important ways, on one hand, forcibly asserts human volition and choice, and on the other, an authentic and true self that reflectively internalizes regulations. While this conceptualization is not wholly congruent with Islamic concepts of the nature of the self and the central principle of submission, through critical engagement, it can be both reconfigured and contextualized within an Islamic superstructure of ideas. Likewise, the notion of submission so endemic to Islam that at first blush it may seem antithetical to autonomy, however, Muslim discourses make clear that submission in its phenomenal sense is the act of recognizing the reality of God and volitionally assenting to submit and serve God.

The groundwork laid within this dissertation will serve as a basis to further engage and elucidate the relationships both in convergence and divergence between SDT and Islam. SDT is a comprehensive theory that imbeds the process of internalization in a complex framework of human nature and needs, content, proximal and pervasive socio-cultural (including political, economic, and religious) contexts, individual and situational difference, and practical strategies facilitating internalization. The groundwork laid herein will hopefully lead to meaningful and critical engagement with these concepts, challenging and appropriating, where fitting, the many insightful ideas SDT has to offer.

As mentioned in the first chapter, any meaningful conceptualization and practice of religious education must involve a thorough study of the socio-psychological phenomenon of internalization. SDT's concept of internalization is among the most robust and has much to offer to a dynamic understanding and practice of religious education. Religious education may be experienced by students and even teachers as controlling, dogmatic, and for some, nothing short of indoctrination. Students who learn religious knowledge in this way can at very best be expected to represent introjected states where students might identify with the knowledge learned but it is experienced as controlling, inducing deep-seated guilt and possible resentment and compartmentalization. At worst, students may be amotivated, decide not to identify with the religious values and beliefs they were taught, and possibly suffer physical, psychological, or spiritual pathologies. Religious education and learning may be also experienced as deeply meaningful, inextricably connecting and integrating meaning and truth, and forming stable and sound commitments that can endure the violent ebb and flow of life. Students who internalize the religious values and practices they are taught in harmony with a growing sense of themselves and the world will not only be faithful to their religious tradition but also be the purveyors of its growth. The concept of internalization brings together the cognitive and affective dimensions that are essential to religious education, and provides a framework to better understand the formation of a holistic person adept at integrating diverse experiences to the aim of promoting psychological and spiritual vitality, and overall growth.

An approach to religious education that is informed by SDT's concept of internalization must seriously consider the complex interplay between psychological needs, human development, the nature of religious content (e.g. particular religious values, beliefs, and

practices), pre-existing schemata, socio-politico-cultural pervasive and proximate contexts, and the dynamic processes and strategies relating these factors. This work is an initial attempt to think about these issues in a dialogical and critical way so that a conceptualization of internalization may emerge that is uniquely conditioned and informed in relation to Islamic discourses. As Muslim parents and communities seek to transmit Islam to their children and posterity, it is vital to relate Islam to a systematic study of internalization that can be scripturally sanctioned, theoretically and methodologically rigorous, and practically useful. This work, I hope, represents some initial steps in that direction. As mentioned earlier, carefully and critically synthesizing Islamic knowledge with SDT and OIT can help Muslims understand how to support and facilitate faith formation and internalization that is mindful of the nature of Islamic beliefs and values sought to be transmitted, the pervasive and proximate contexts that, to varying degrees and effects, inform modern values, sensibilities, attitudes, and behaviors, and the needs and wants that we feel as part of our human nature, whether more endemic or socially constructed. In concrete forms, a synthetic theory can help inform curricular content and pedagogical practices among Muslim educators with a focus on evaluating the internalizability of Islamic content and strategies facilitating internalization. Schools and other Islamic institutions can create a culture that support autonomy (in its qualified form), competence, and relatedness, and facilitate internalization of a rich religious tradition that has proved meaningful to a diverse people for over a millennium and meet the ongoing challenges of the world we live in and the world we will leave to posterity.

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